

MEMOIRS  
OF  
PIUS THE SIXTH.



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MEMOIRS

PAGE SIXTH



*HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL*

MEMOIRS

*K* — PIUS THE SIXTH,

AND OF

HIS PONTIFICATE,

DOWN TO THE PERIOD OF HIS RETIREMENT INTO TUSCANY,

CONTAINING

*CURIOUS AND INTERESTING PARTICULARS,*

DERIVED FROM THE

MOST AUTHENTIC SOURCES OF INFORMATION,

CONCERNING

HIS PRIVATE LIFE,

HIS DISPUTES WITH THE DIFFERENT POWERS OF EUROPE,

THE CAUSES WHICH LED TO

THE SUBVERSION OF THE PAPAL THRONE—AND

THE ROMAN REVOLUTION.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

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VOL. I.

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THE  
**AUTHOR'S PREFACE.**

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**I**T is not always the great qualities, the illustrious exploits, or the flagrant crimes of a sovereign, that render his reign an epoch important in history. It is sufficient that he should have been the co-operator in important events, or the conspicuous victim of some dreadful calamity; that around him, in his name, in a word, at his very expense, there should have happened some of those circumstances which leave deep impressions upon the memory of mankind.

By these different titles, the pontificate of Pius VI., of which he is already dispossessed, deserves to be presented to public attention, with a few explanations.

It is not his history, however, that we engage to write; we wish only to offer ma-

terials for it, arranged upon a philosophic plan. What period, in fact, is more worthy of the attention of the philosopher than that in which the imposing fabric of temporal and spiritual power, surrounded by every thing that seemed to ensure its stability, is on a sudden shaken down, as if by one of those miracles which superstition might have thought its principal support; when the sceptre and the censer are seen broken by the same blow; the pontiff hurled from his chair, the sovereign from his throne; his Levites and his courtiers, the members of his spiritual retinue, and those of his temporal council, plundered, imprisoned, and dispersed; thus, by the most dreadful catastrophe, expiating a long series of errors consolidated by ten centuries, a long abuse of human credulity, of pretensions, the insolence of which excited nothing but the smile of contempt; in short, a conduct emanating, in these latter times, from the blindest phrensy, and such as

was best adapted to accelerate its overthrow, even had it been dictated by the enemies of the Holy See.

How can this sudden fall have been effected without violent shocks, and almost without bloodshed? What combination of events has then prepared, what immediate causes have led to a result which makes one part of Europe tremble, and strikes the other with stupefaction? This we shall endeavour to develop in the following picture of the pontificate of Pius VI. We shall abstain from declamation, which we leave to intolerance, as it is only a mark of animosity, and renders all narratives suspicious. In our opinion, sound reason should employ, towards a fallen and unfortunate enemy, neither abuse nor insulting disdain. We wish to justify the title we have assumed, and prove ourselves Historians and Philosophers.



It is not intended to suggest that the  
even had it been desired by the enemies of  
the House of Representatives  
to show any disposition to be a party effect  
of a different view of the world, and almost with  
the exception of the World's Convention of 1893  
has been regarded, what immediate causes  
have led to a result which makes one part of  
Europe possible, and still as the other with  
the exception of this we shall endeavor to de-  
velop in the following pages of the book  
the case of the World's Convention of 1893  
which we have so often mentioned  
as it is only a mark of an old, and ready  
all parties are religious. In our opinion  
should rather than attempt to make a false  
and unfortunate 7 DECEMBER 1893  
including details. We wish to justify the  
case we have advanced, and to give ourselves  
historians and the public.

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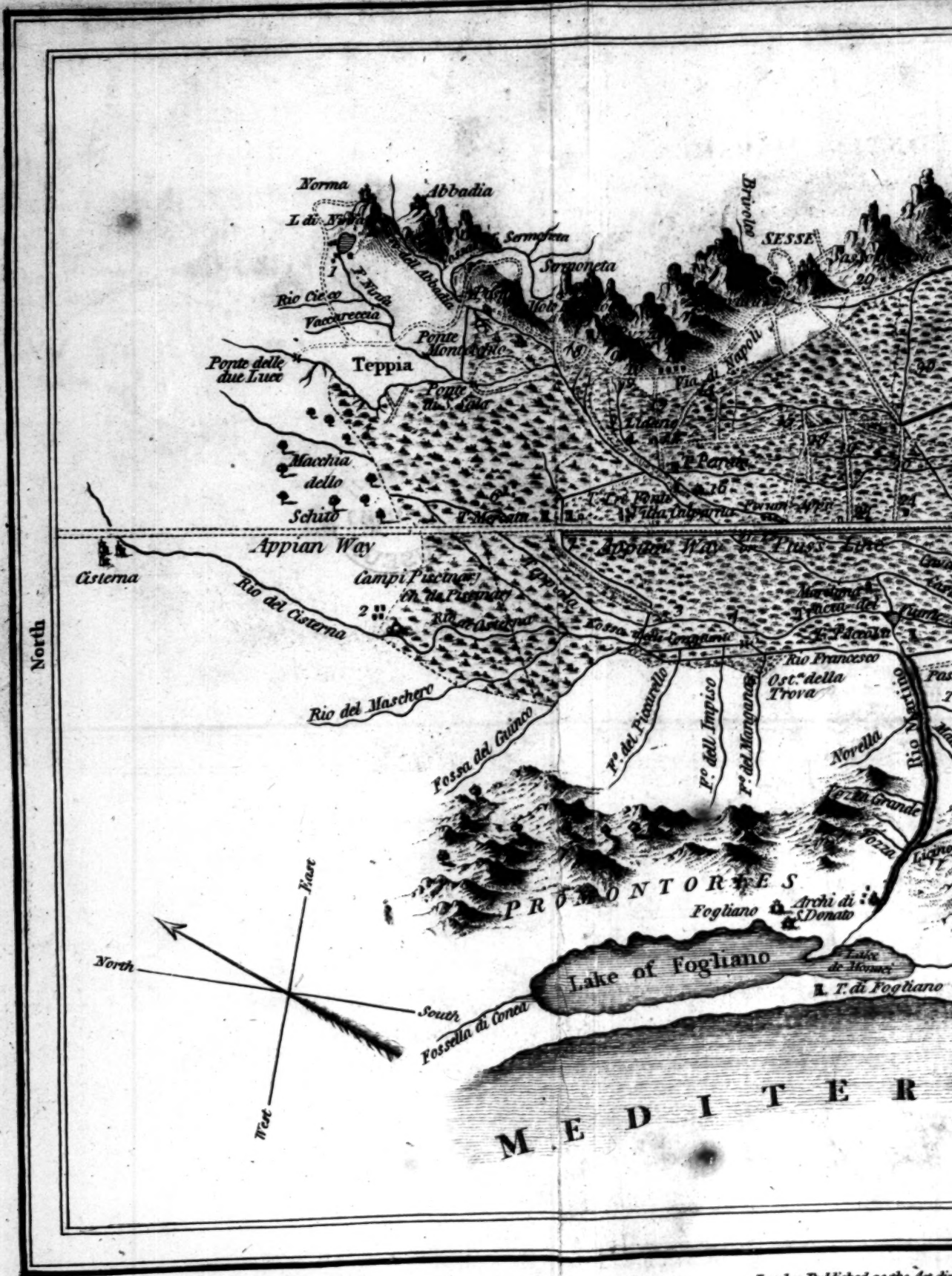
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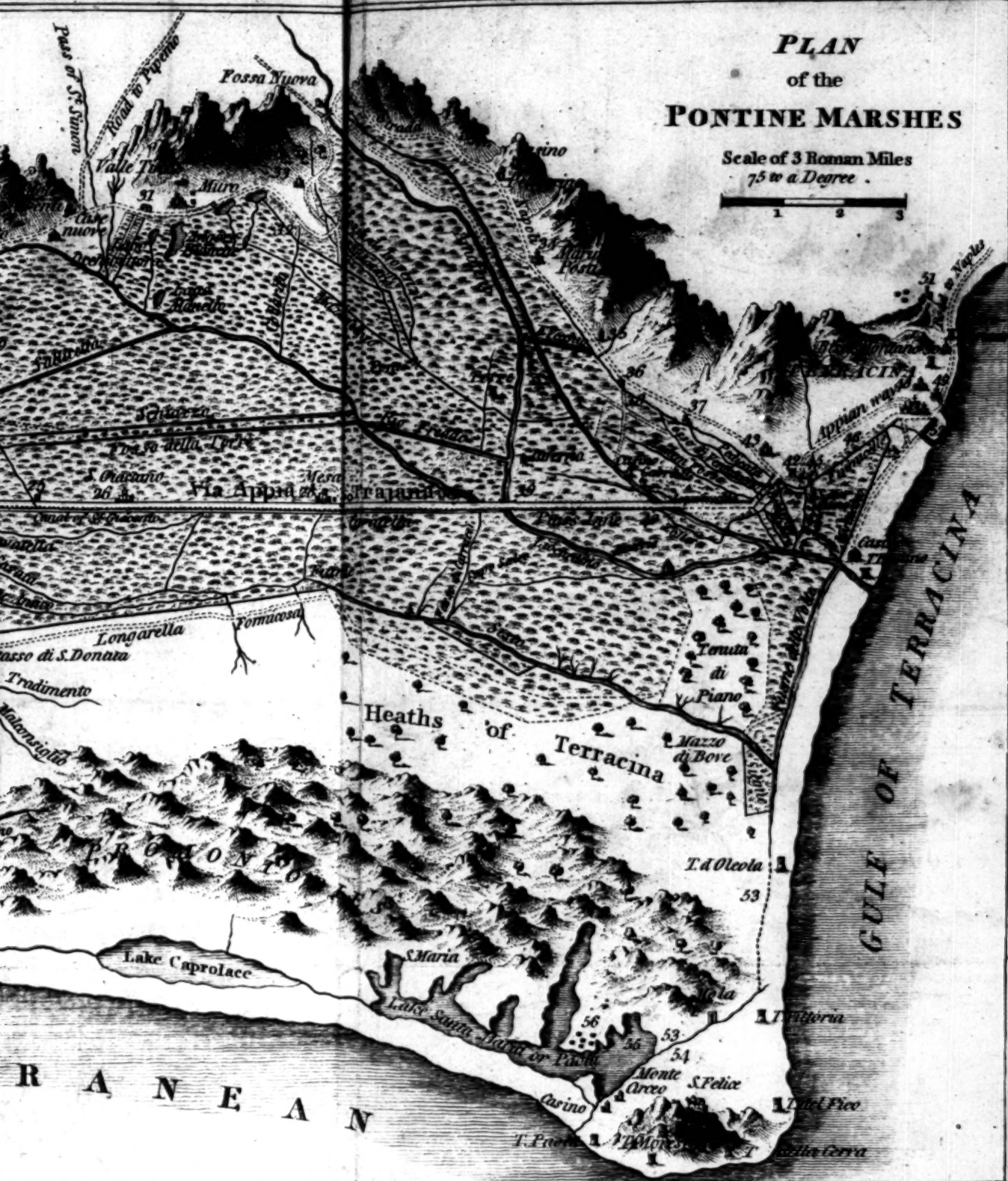




East

PLAN  
of the  
PONTINE MARSHES

Scale of 3 Roman Miles  
75 to a Degree



South

West

O<sup>®</sup>  
arch  
ations



HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL  
MEMOIRS OF PIUS VI.

AND OF  
HIS PONTIFICATE.

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CHAPTER I.

*End of the Pontificate of CLEMENT XIV.—Proceedings of the Sacred College.*

ON the demise of the fanatical Rezzonico, Ganganelli had, in 1769, been seated upon the papal throne, through the influence of the courts of Madrid and Versailles. They had expelled the Jesuits from their dominions; but the measure remained incomplete as long as that too famous society still existed in the other catholic countries, and, especially, as long as it was acknowledged and protected by the Holy See. Clement XIII. had converted some of its members into powerful and dangerous instruments, that had well nigh occasioned a schism in the

church, and embroiled all Europe; or, rather, the Jesuits had made of the pontiff, who was a man more weak than wicked, the blind instrument of their fanaticism and ambition. It was in agitation to lay the axe to the trunk of that immense tree, which threw its baleful shadow over a great part of the Christian world, and of which the widely-spreading roots extended even under the pontifical chair. Cardinal Ganganelli appeared to have justly appreciated this dangerous society. His sound judgment had not been impaired by his abode in a cloister, nor by the honours of the Roman purple. He was prudent and conciliating; and seemed to unite two qualities seldom found together, courage and moderation. The family of Bourbon was in hopes of obtaining from him the entire destruction of the Jesuits. Their ministers had indeed made it a tacit condition of his elevation to the papal throne, particularly the Spanish ambassador, Don Joseph Monino, afterwards created count of Florida Blanca. Of an active and persevering disposition he earnestly endeavoured to remove Ganganelli's doubts, to combat his scruples, and to quiet his alarms. He had long to struggle against the endless intrigues of the party which he wished to subdue, and which had numerous and powerful adherents, particularly at Rome. At length, on the 21st of July, 1773, he obtained,

or rather extorted, the famous bull, *motu proprio*, which pronounced the extinction of the society of Jesuits. At the moment of signing it, Clement XIV. still hesitated, and said, as if with a foreknowledge of his fate, *I know very well that I am about to sign my death-warrant; but no matter: the die is cast.*

From that day, fatal to him as well as to the Jesuits, Ganganelli lived a prey to every kind of anguish. The fanatics endeavoured to excite the people to revolt; and threats were held out of an attempt upon his life. His health visibly declined: reassured, however, by the ministers of the two crowns, his courage occasionally revived; and in the month of April, 1774, he announced to the Consistory, for the following year, the jubilee, which since the time of Sixtus V. had been regularly celebrated four times in a century. The celebration of it was reserved for another, Clement XIV. departing this life on the 22d of September following. His death did not excite the public regret to which he had so many claims. The Jesuits and their partisans had the insolence to celebrate it as a triumph; the people, who appeared to behold it with unconcern, accused him of having suffered himself to be deceived by his secret advisers; while the majority of the cardinals still resented his signing of the bull, and complained, almost



4  
without exception, that he had withheld from them every mark of confidence.

A report was soon spread that poison had put an end to his days. Though prudently contradicted by the physicians who had attended him during his illness, it gained credit from the indiscretion of the surgeons, who made no scruple of declaring that his body had fallen to pieces as soon as deprived of life. Now that the facts, sheltered from the passions which distorted them, are more easily ascertained, it appears incontestable that poison was really administered to Ganganelli. The cardinal de Bernis entertained no doubt of it, as more than one foreigner, who knew him at Rome, can testify. Gorani, on the contrary, maintains that Clement XIV. died in consequence of the terror with which he was struck, after having signed what he called *his death-warrant*. He must, however, permit us to prefer to his testimony that of individuals who were about Ganganelli's person, even to the last moments of his life, and who could have no motive for the invention of an atrocious crime. The enemies of Clement XIV. had, on the contrary, strong reasons to deny a fact, which rendered him interesting, by holding him up as a victim sacrificed to the fury of party; and it appears, that it is from that suspicious source that Gorani has drawn his notions concerning

Ganganelli. He calls in question the authenticity of the letters which were published in his name; and pretends that they could never be the productions of a man who was imbued indeed with theological ideas, but whose information upon all other subjects was very much confined. We think we can venture to assert, that in this respect Gorani is deceived. Those who were intimately acquainted with Ganganelli, and among them this same cardinal de Bernis, who was an excellent judge of men and things, have often affirmed that they have seen the originals of the letters published by Caraccioli; and that it was easy to recognise in them the principles professed by the pope, his philosophical ideas, and his very manner of expressing them. However this may be, some time before his death, the moment of which more than one cardinal could, perhaps, have predicted to a certainty, the Sacred College, animated by a spirit, which most assuredly was not the Holy Ghost, busied itself in intrigues, in order to seat a pontiff more favourable to its views upon the papal throne. The great majority was composed of those *zelanti*, or zealous priests, who will be seen in the sequel of this work playing a principal part during the pontificate of Pius VI. Taken in the mass, they formed the party opposed to that of the two crowns; but there were among them a great

many gradations of character. Some, and it was the smaller number, were *zealous* from a blind fanaticism, which was capable of leading them into the greatest excesses: others, from a cold conviction, productive of obstinacy, but not of religious rage: the greater part were *zelanti* from interest and pride. They stood forth as the strenuous defenders of ecclesiastical immunities, because they partook of the power and splendor thence accruing to the Holy See; and because the maintenance of those immunities brought into the apostolic coffers treasures which composed a part of their patrimony. It would have required no common effort of philosophy to rid them of their attachment to maxims which insured them homage, power, and gold. Was it in the Sacred College, even at the end of the eighteenth century, that philosophy could hope to find an asylum?

It contained then, at the death of Ganganelli, furious *zelanti*, such as the Rezzonicos, and the Torrigianis; and moderate *zelanti*, such as the Albanis and the Colonnas. Some of them were accessible to reason, others to fear, and almost all were more or less attached to the Jesuits. How indeed could it be otherwise? The Jesuits were the most strenuous supporters, the most artful apologists, and the most devoted servants of the Holy See. Deprived of their support, it re-



sembled a despot after the disbanding of his prætorian guards. They may be said indeed to have been the nobility of the papal monarchy. It was a truth confusedly felt every where; a truth which the illustrious Montesquieu had been the first clearly to express; and which experience has since evidently demonstrated, that there was no monarchy without its *noblesse*. We have accordingly seen, that after the abolition of the order of Jesus the papal authority perceptibly declined; and it is, perhaps, still more to that cause, than to the progress of knowledge, that we may attribute its rapid and easy overthrow.

This was well understood by the *zelanti*, and the numerous party of which they were the chiefs. It was not, however, that they all entertained a wish to resuscitate the defunct society. All were fond of its maxims, and the bosoms of all retained a mixed sentiment of regret and hope. But there were some, who, prudent from timidity, and moderate from their natural disposition, would have been frightened at the violent means that must necessarily have been employed to restore all at once to the Holy See its most effective support; at the struggles that would have taken place between the pope and the temporal sovereigns; and at the calamities that would thence have resulted to the church.

They wished to leave to time, to reflection, and to the gradual abatement of the rancorous passions, the care of bringing about the desired revolution; permitting themselves only to accelerate the moment of it by secret intrigues, and by all those artful manœuvres which priests, and Italian priests especially, so well knew how to employ.

It was among these *minor canons* of the *zelanti*, if the expression may be allowed, that cardinal Braschi took his seat. Hitherto he had not been sufficiently important to excite in any party either sentiments of strong affection, or of insurmountable dislike. He was a man of sense; possessed information of a certain kind; and, in his office of treasurer of the Apostolical Chamber, had proved himself not altogether destitute of talents. His face was remarkably fine, and his person commanding; external advantages, which, though not always serviceable to their possessor, are never prejudicial—such were his claims to attention. He was the pupil of Benedict XIV.: this furnished a favourable presumption of his prudence. He had been invested with the purple by Clement XIII. the last of the fanatical popes: this was a reason for his not appearing formidable to the *zelanti*, and even for his allowing them still to retain their hopes.

The reader will not be sorry to be made acquainted with the judgment formed of him, when there was as yet no appearance of his being elevated to the papal throne, by a person equally divested of odious prejudices, and blind partiality; a man not less estimable on account of his moderation and sagacity, than remarkable for the brilliant qualities of his mind: in saying this, we sufficiently indicate the cardinal de Bernis.

This judgment will besides have the merit of comprising a summary of the life of Pius VI. till his exaltation, as well as that of enabling us to compare his pontificate with the opinion that had been previously formed of his character.

“ John Angelo Braschi was born at Cesena, on the 27th of December, 1717. The favours of Benedict XIV. opened to him the road to preferment. Having employed M. Braschi in the management of certain affairs, he rewarded him with a canonry of St. Peter's, by means of which he procured himself a place in the prelature. Clement XIII. afterwards appointed him auditor of the *Camerlingo*\*, and shortly

\* The place of *Camerlingo* was one of the most distinguished at the court of Rome, but it was merely honorary, and almost a sinecure. The cardinal *Camerlingo* was nominally the chief-surveyor of streets and fountains, and put his signature at the bottom of all public acts relative to the finances. He was



after treasurer of the Apostolical Chamber\*. Although his talents are generally admitted, people have not been wanting to attribute so rapid a fortune to the favour of the Jesuits, to whom it was even said that he had been too complaisant. It appears that the present pope †, after having bestowed upon him a cardinal's hat, has not continued to shew him the same marks of confidence as before his promotion; a change, upon which the enemies of the cardinal have not failed to put an unfavourable construction. No one can deny that he is possessed of a great deal of activity, and of considerable knowledge of a variety of kinds. Whatever may be the motive that has for some time reduced his credit to the mere respect due to the rank he occupies, it is not supposed that he is of a disposition long to remain quiet in that neglected state. He has sufficient sagacity to find opportunities of rendering himself necessary; or at least to procure himself a certain degree of consideration. It is true, that his reputation of being too enterprising will always be very prejudicial to him. He is, however, a man whose influence in a conclave is not to be despised."

considered as the principal minister of the Apostolical Chamber; but the real minister of the finances was the treasurer.

\* We shall hereafter explain the nature of the Apostolical Chamber.

† Clement XIV. was then alive.

This brief notice of the life and character of Pius VI. before his promotion to the pontificate, is worthy of remark in more respects than one. It proves, that nothing at that time announced him as likely to be thought of for the papal dignity; and that one of the most powerful cardinals felt for him neither a decisive aversion nor regard. It proves, above all, that before he was seated in St. Peter's chair, he was but imperfectly known. In this portrait, drawn by an impartial and enlightened hand, we scarcely find a trace of any of those defects which have by turns devoted him to ridicule and hatred, and of which we are about to see the development in the picture of his pontificate. So true it is, that the good and bad qualities of most men are called forth, if not created, by circumstances; or, rather, that what is a slight defect in one situation becomes a serious mischief in another.

Nothing then at the death of Clement XIV. announced that cardinal Braschi could become his successor. The ministers of the two crowns were only sensible, that it would be impossible for them to make a choice exactly conformable to their wishes. They had it in their power to dictate the exclusion of a few candidates only; but they were afraid of being too lavish of that violent remedy. Among the cardinals, whose elevation they would have desired, some, like Stoppani,

who in the last conclave had been the principal competitor of Ganganelli, were verging upon decrepitude; others, like Conti and Simoni, although endowed with talents, and professing moderate principles, did not inspire complete confidence; while others, such as Malvezzi, Negroni, and Zelada, who were distinguished by their abilities and the wisdom of their opinions, had manifested their obsequiousness to the two crowns, and their aversion to the Jesuits, too strongly, not to be excluded by a great majority of the Sacred College. Almost all the others were either destitute of capacity, or very suspicious on account of the views they were supposed to entertain.



## CHAPTER II.

*Details concerning the Conclave of 1774.*

WE have just seen what was the state of parties when the conclave opened on the 5th of October, 1774.

From that very day the faction of the *zelanti* endeavoured to carry, as by assault, the election of one of its faithful adherents, cardinal Colonna Pamphili. He was not, by a great deal, the most furious of the party: had he been so, the *zelanti* would never have dared to propose him; but they thought him proper to second their views under cover of his apparent moderation. He was not one of those whose formal exclusion the ministers of the two crowns would have insisted upon; but they were averse to his pretensions: they wished, besides, to gain the time necessary to strengthen their party by the arrival of several cardinals, who were expected from France, Spain, Portugal, and the rest of Italy. This was exactly what the *zelanti* dreaded. The cardinal de Bernis and Don Joseph Mo- nino were obliged, more than once, to assume a very energetic tone, in order to restrain their impatience; while the court of Lisbon, where

the imperious Pombal still domineered, spoke to them upon the subject in threatening terms.

Thus was the conclave, from the first moment of its opening, the seat of cabals: every day a new plot was laid, discovered, and defeated. Under the mask of decency and respect, and while the different parties hypocritically invoked the assistance of the Divine Spirit, the most worldly perfidy was reciprocally and profusely put in practice. "Nothing can be more imposing," said a person who was eye-witness to these intrigues, to his correspondent, "nothing can present a more edifying exterior than the regularity, the piety, and the apparent moderation of the Sacred College; but I can say with truth, that under this sacred veil every honest man must grieve to see so much falsehood, stratagem, equivocation, and deceit. Here all the passions are united and concentrated; and, in the present circumstances, derive additional strength from the revengeful fury of the Jesuits' party, and from the discontent that prevailed during the last pontificate."

The Sacred College, however, while granting to the ministers of the two crowns the respite upon which they so strongly insisted, made repeated trials of its strength, and often counted the votes of the different parties. Every day there was at least one ballot, which had no other

result than a very small majority in favour of some of the cardinals. In these *coups d'essai* Mark Anthony Colonna obtained the greatest number of suffrages. He was enlightened, virtuous even to austerity, but attached to the Jesuits, and consequently could not be agreeable to the catholic courts. On the other hand, he enjoyed too much consideration, and was of too illustrious a family for the prevailing faction to think seriously of making him pope. He served then, properly speaking, to trifle away time. This game was played for several months, during which Braschi never obtained more than a single vote, and even that was at distant intervals; nor did cardinal de Bernis, nor the minister of Spain, yet foresee in favour of whom the majority would definitively unite. Braschi was beginning only to gain countenance among the partisans of the Jesuits, without whose support he felt that it would be impossible for him to attain the papacy. He perceived no signs of his being personally disagreeable to the two crowns; he had even been living for a long time past in a kind of intimacy with their ministers; and it is not unlikely that he now began to entertain some faint hope of success.

While in expectation of the arrival of the cardinals, for whose presence they were obliged to



wait, the *zelanti* redoubled their intrigues. Their most active agent was cardinal J. B. Rezzonico, nephew of the too famous Clement XIII. His talents did not go beyond mediocrity; but he had the memory of his uncle to revenge; wished to serve the cause of the Jesuits; and partook in some degree of the credit of his brother, the cardinal *Camerlingo*. He was therefore one of the most powerful instruments of that party, of which the two cardinals Colonna were the most conspicuous, but not the most dangerous chiefs. Immediately under the Rezzonicos and the Colonnas, stood *Castelli*, a sincere enthusiast, whose amiable qualities were spoiled by a large portion of obstinacy; *Boschi*, a man of talents, of a gentle and insinuating disposition, but who had signed the famous brief against the Infant of Parma, and who thereby found himself engaged in the cause of the *zelanti*; *Paracciani*, enlightened, but insincere, and solely calculated for intrigue; *Buffalini*, artful, acute, and enjoying great consideration; with several others, who played a less conspicuous part, but who, although in the back ground, rendered essential services to the party. The two crowns then had against them both numbers and talents; and it required nothing less than their political preponderance, and the capacity of their two principal agents,

to insure their success. Even with those advantages, it was long disputed, and at last was incomplete. They were obliged, as we are about to see, to capitulate with difficulties.

The long-expected cardinals at last arrived, and from that moment the scene began to change. It was time to put an end to the farce which the *zelanti* were playing, and for the conclave to think seriously of making a choice. Out of thirty-seven cardinals present, sixteen were in the interest of the two crowns. This was enough to prevent the election of a pope, decidedly hostile to their views; but as the laws of the conclave require a majority, consisting of at least two thirds of the votes, it was not enough to enable them to dispose of the tiara as they pleased. Besides, the catholic courts were not even agreed among themselves; that of Spain supporting Pallavicini, a near relation of its prime minister, the duke of Grimaldi; and Austria favouring Visconti, who had been nuncio at Vienna.

But these two cardinals had nothing else to recommend them to the notice of the Sacred College; while Braschi, who had discovered considerable skill in conciliating the favour of both parties, and who seemed to have less objections to fear than any other, was powerfully aided by the zeal and address of cardinal Giraud, who had been pope's nuncio in France. The cardinal de Bernis

also represented him to his court as an eligible candidate, provided no better could be found; and, as great reliance was placed upon his discernment, his opinion met with no opposition. The insinuations of cardinal Giraud were listened to by J. F. Albani, dean of the college, whose character at all times gave him weight; and who derived particular influence from his place during the vacancy of the Holy See. The ministers of France and Spain augured well of his capacity and even of his intentions. Don Joseph Monino, without giving up Pallavicini, thought with the cardinal de Bernis, that Braschi, although a creature of the Rezzonicos, would abstain from all innovation upon the measures of Clement XIV.; but the Portuguese minister was of opinion that his attachment to the Jesuits was incurable, though pretty well disguised; and that was still at Lisbon a crime of the deepest die. Corfini, the minister of the court of Vienna, had formerly had a quarrel with him, the remembrance of which was deeply rooted in his mind. This double opposition occasioned the dereliction of a project, that as yet was but in embryo; and all the brilliant hopes that Braschi had indulged for several days, were completely done away. His name scarcely reappeared in the following ballots; and the year 1774 terminated in the midst of uncertainty.



Bernis began to fear that the influence of the two crowns would soon be reduced to little or nothing. He even foresaw the possibility of a choice being made in direct opposition to their views; and demanded instructions how to act upon such an event.

The cardinals could see no end to the prolongation of the conclave. They recollected with dismay, that the election of Benedict XIV. was the result of six months confinement. Several, who were a prey to disease and to *ennui*, the most cruel of all maladies, came out of their cells; and even those who made a pastime of intrigue, began to lose all patience.

Some turned their thoughts to cardinal Migazzi, archbishop of Vienna, against whom strong prejudices existed at Rome, previously to his arrival; but who seemed to place a confidence in the ministers of the two courts; and began to make some progress in their esteem. He was weakly supported. Others thought of Borromeo, a man of sense, but of a rough temper and original turn of mind. He was besides too much devoted to the Jesuits. Others proposed Caraccioli; but he was full of scruples, attached to bulls, and disliked by the two crowns. Their ministers regretted Braschi: they sounded him; and Braschi affected indifference.

Monino recurred to Pallavicini, and Bernis

seconded him; but Pallavicini excited very little interest. They had next some thoughts of reverting to Visconti: he was prudent, gentle, and timid; but his talents were of too humble a kind: besides the *zelanti* obstinately rejected every candidate proposed by the two crowns.

Cardinal Zelada was brought forward, in order to reconcile the two factions; a part to which he was admirably suited. It was then agreed upon, that each side should propose three candidates; and the attempt was twice made, and as often failed. Cardinal Braschi had been brought forward by neither side.

While this was going on, an aperture was discovered in the wall of the conclave; and by some attributed to curiosity; by others to intrigue. Neither of them merited the accusation. Intrigue, entirely concentrated in the conclave, had no need of fuel from without; while indiscretion left curiosity nothing to desire. It was much more probable that a desire to purloin the plate of the cardinals had occasioned this aperture, which was immediately closed; and nothing remained but the suspicions to which it had given birth.

This little incident served for a moment to beguile the *ennui* of the conclave, which was involved in fresh uncertainty. The ministers of the two crowns, and the cardinals devoted to  
 them,

them, hesitated for some time between Visconti, Pallavicini, and Braschi. The last had thirty-two votes towards the end of January, which was two more than he wanted. The minister of Spain, before he gave up the point, determined to make another effort, and even to exhaust his credit, in favour of Pallavicini; for the marquis de Grimaldi was highly ambitious of the honour of having the pope for his cousin-german; and Charles III. who was much attached to his minister, partook of his desire. Catholic by virtue of his crown, and of a pious disposition, he naturally kept up a close connexion with the court of Rome, and could not be indifferent to the choice of a sovereign pontiff. Besides, as Charles III., Grimaldi, and Monino, still harboured a strong resentment against the Jesuits, the mere suspicion of belonging to their party was enough to inspire them with dislike. The court of Versailles, less devout and less hostile to the defunct society, was not so scrupulous. Its only wish was to do nothing that might too much thwart that of Madrid; and the instructions it sent to Rome amounted to no more.

Pallavicini saw, however, that the kind exertions of Spain in his favour produced no effect; and, either through timidity, modesty, or fear lest his failure should be attended with too much *acids*, testified, with all the energy of which he



was capable, that he was afflicted at seeing himself the cause of so much delay. Bernis made use of the most earnest entreaties in order to revive his courage, and to get the better of his scruples. "We will not suffer ourselves to be discouraged," said he; "we will rather remain six months in our cells, should it become necessary." Pallavicini was not to be moved; he formally declared that he would refuse the tiara; and indicated Braschi as the most proper person to reconcile all parties. Monino, who served him rather out of duty than affection, yielded without much reluctance to this determination. Actuated by a regard for the court of Vienna, the ministers of the two crowns made one attempt more in favour of Visconti. The *zelanti* were entirely hostile to him; and it was not worth while to come to an open rupture, nor even to prolong a conclave already so tedious. At length the two principal parties were convinced that it was impossible for them to choose a pope among the cardinals, who were held by them respectively in the highest esteem. Bernis and Monino, who by means of their talents, and the importance of their courts, retained the principal influence, were sensible that, as they could not succeed in spite of the *zelanti*, it became necessary to abandon the contest, and choose from among that party one of those to whom the two

crowns had the least dislike. They reverted then to Braschi, whose friend cardinal Giraud had served him with a great deal of zeal. Bernis and Monino completed the conversion of Corfini, the Imperial ambassador, and of the ministers of Portugal and Naples; while cardinal Zelada negotiated with his usual dexterity. He removed a number of difficulties; persuaded the *zelanti* that Braschi could not be dangerous; and offered to be responsible to the ministers of the two crowns for his moderation, his principles, and his faithful observance of the engagements contracted by his predecessor. The road being thus smoothed, the cardinals, on the 24th of February, proceeded to a ballot, in which Braschi was unanimously elected. The Sacred College, according to custom, went immediately in a body to kiss his hand in his cell, and to pay him that first homage to which idolatrous superstition did not scruple to give the name of *adoration*.

This narrative sufficiently proves that the election of Pius VI. was not preconcerted, and that it was much less the work of the two crowns, than the result of circumstances. Bernis, on entering the conclave, did not suspect that it could ever take place; and when he began to desire it, was still without hopes. He announced it to his court in the following words.

“It is thought that cardinal Braschi will fill his high station with credit to himself: the public at least has always entertained a favourable idea of him; and nobody denies him information, piety, and the most rigorous probity, from which he has never swerved. While yet a young man, he was honoured with the esteem of that enlightened pontiff, Benedict XIV. who opened to him the road to preferment. Although he enjoyed a high degree of favour during the pontificate of Clement XIII. no action was ever imputed to him that could justify a suspicion of fanaticism. Created a cardinal by Clement XIV. whom some evil-disposed persons had prejudiced against him, he submitted silently to his disgrace, and only appeared to recollect the favours he had received. In the beginning of the conclave he beheld with unconcern the project of his election destroyed almost as soon as formed. In a word, the whole of his conduct indicates *an honest man, full of courage, fortitude, prudence, and moderation.* There is no answering, however, for the events which may result from certain circumstances; nor for the change which a too great elevation is apt to produce in the mind and disposition of the greater part of mankind.”

—“God alone can penetrate to the bottom of the heart; men can only judge by appearances. The reign of the new pope will show whether,



before his election, he wore his own face or a mask."

Such a horoscope, drawn by so judicious a man as the cardinal de Bernis, was certainly a favourable augury. It was very far, however, from being justified by the pontificate of Pius VI. Not that before his elevation he wore a mask which he afterwards laid aside. Hypocrisy has no place among the defects with which he is reproached; but the performance of his functions has held him out in several points of view, in which the public till then had had no opportunity of seeing him. Though weak and obstinate by turns, it is still more to vanity, of which he had hardly been suspected, when lost in the crowd of cardinals, that his faults and his misfortunes are ascribable. But it would be highly unjust not to set down the greater part of them to the account of circumstances. Neither the firmness of Sixtus V. nor the wisdom of Benedict XIV. would have sufficed to save the bark of St. Peter from the storms of which it was the sport during his long pontificate, and by which it was at last entirely submerged.

## CHAPTER III.

Pius VI. upon the Papal Throne—His first Transactions with Spain and Prussia.

THE turbulent and capricious people of Rome, who, perhaps, resemble the ancient Romans in those qualities alone, did not at first appear to applaud the election of Pius VI. They regarded him as a pupil of those Rezzonicos, whose incautious fanaticism had brought the Holy See into circumstances of such great danger; and applied to him a famous Latin verse, composed under the pontificate of Alexander VI. and importing that Rome had always been ruined by sovereigns who bore the title of *Sextus* :

*Semper sub Sextis perditâ Roma fuit.*

In effect, Sextus Tarquinius provoked by his tyranny the expulsion of the kings of Rome; Urban VI. began the great schism of the west; Alexander VI. astonished Rome and the whole world by the enormity of his crimes; and Pius VI. has but too well realized the presentiment suggested by his name. Never did prophecy appear less founded: never was any one more punctually fulfilled.

The new pope, however, spared nothing at first that could conciliate the good opinion of the public. At the moment when his election was proclaimed in the chapel of the conclave, he fell on his knees, and offered up his prayers to heaven in terms so moving, that the whole of his auditory burst into tears. *Venerable fathers*, said he, addressing himself to the cardinals, *your meeting is at an end; but how unfortunate is the result of it to me!* Was this mere affectation, or did he feel a secret foreboding of the fate that awaited him? He distributed money to the poor; took under his immediate protection a woman little favoured with the gifts of fortune, who had had the care of his infant years; and, in his first distribution of ecclesiastical favours, gave a preference to the most worthy and least opulent prelates. To these benevolent acts he added several acts of firmness. He severely reprimanded the prelate Potenziani, governor of Rome, on account of the disorders which he had not taken care to repress; deprived Nicholas Bischi, præfect of the *annona*\*, of his pension, and compelled him to give in his accounts; declared that he would dismiss all those from their employments who had acquired them by unworthy

\* A counsellor charged to superintend the victualling of Rome. We shall speak hereafter of the *annona* and of Nicholas Bischi.



means; saved the Apostolical Chamber, by suppressing several pensions, an annual expense of forty thousand Roman crowns; and promised to make the cardinals his advisers in all affairs of state. This was recommending himself at the expense of his predecessor, who had been singularly sparing of his confidence. His whole conduct bespoke him humane, easy of access, laborious, and temperate. In a word, his *début* gained him almost every heart. But was there ever a sovereign who did not begin his career in the same way? In a new order of things, is there any man indeed who is not equally fond of giving and of entertaining hopes?

His principal, and most difficult part, was that which he had to play with the ministers of the two crowns, to whom he was indebted for the tiara, and with whom he had entered into engagements so much the more delicate, as they were contradictory to his secret sentiments; for the whole course of his pontificate proved that at the bottom of his heart he was a friend to the Jesuits. His gratitude was also due to the *zelanti*; and who knows what promises he might not have made them? He stood therefore in a very difficult situation. On both sides he was under the influence of fear, and made alternate sacrifices, according as one or other party threatened him with the more imminent danger.

He was sensible how much it was his interest to conciliate the favour of the catholic courts, particularly those of Madrid and Versailles ; but he remembered also the tragical end of Ganganelli. Hence those variations and measures apparently contradictory. Both parties attributed them to his duplicity ; while in fact they were only ascribable to that inconsistency which is so naturally attendant upon a want of resolution. Could any thing else indeed be expected from a man who combined weakness of power with weakness of mind ?

To the cardinal de Bernis, however, he behaved with a degree of tractability, which proceeded as much from inclination as from want of firmness. He often asked his advice, and almost always followed it. It even seemed as if he affected to live in intimacy with him, and to give him public testimonies of attachment, and sometimes of deference.

It was not enough for the ministers of the two crowns to have seated in the chair of St. Peter a pontiff on whom they could depend : it was necessary that the persons about him should be such as they approved. This was a condition, a tacit one at least, of his election. They had no difficulty in getting cardinal Pallavicini confirmed in the place of secretary of state, which to them was the most interesting of all.

They would have wished to procure the *datario* for cardinal Malvezzi, who had given proofs of abilities, of virtue, and of his attachment to France; but he was too odious to the *zelanti*; and Bernis, who was always prudent and moderate, did not require that Pius VI. should give them too great cause of complaint, especially at the commencement of his career.— Let them, said he, obtain some of those places, more honourable than important, which you have at your disposal; acquit yourself thus of the obligations you owe them; but be upon your guard against their counsels. After some hesitation, the *datario* was given to the worthy cardinal Negroni, whom the two crowns would have wished to seat in the chair of St. Peter, in preference to any one else; and the secretaryship of briefs to cardinal Conti, an honest, laborious, and liberal man, who was much better qualified for the place of secretary of state than Pallavicini. But on every side some little consideration or other was to be kept in view; and Pius VI. thus passed the whole of his pontificate, sometimes in endeavouring to conciliate the favour of the catholic courts, sometimes of his benefactors, and still more frequently of his enemies. Hence those vacillations, and those hazardous steps, which either became a source of regret, or made him the object of reproaches;



and hence those half measures which weakened authority and inflamed discontent.

Scarcely was he seated on the papal throne, when the *zelanti*, who affected to consider him as their creature, had cause of complaint. They wished him to become the minister of their vengeance, and the redresser of the pretended wrongs of the former reign. Ricci, the general of the Jesuits, and several other furious partisans of the defunct society, had been confined in the castle of St. Angelo; and a prosecution had been set on foot against them during the preceding pontificate. According to the *zelanti*, it was proper that the death of Clement XIV. should put an end to these rigorous proceedings. Pius VI. had the courage to declare, that the ordinary forms of justice should be adhered to in regard to the accused; but this apparent courage was derived from the fear with which he was inspired by count de Florida Blanca, who would not have suffered the smallest attack to be made upon his work. Nothing less than the firmness of that Spanish minister was necessary to countervail the influence of the numerous partisans of the Jesuits; that is to say, of all who at Rome had either fortune or interest, with the exception of a few cardinals, and of the monastic orders, who were jealous of the society of Jesus. The consequence was, that, during this

long pontificate, not six months passed without some attempt being made in its favour. Sometimes endeavours were made to entrap the easy nature of the pope, in order to extort from him some promise or some equivocal measure; at others, pamphlets were published fanatically injurious to the memory of Clement XIV. Every thing served as a pretence for persecution, or as fuel for animosity. The different passions assumed by turns the mask of religion, in order the more easily to attain their ends. Even the canonisation of saints was made a sort of political concern.

John Palafox, a prelate of the last century, distinguished by his talents and his piety, but still better known by his quarrels with the missionaries of the Jesuits, while he was bishop in Mexico, was become, a hundred years after his death, an object of contention in the catholic church. Recalled to Spain by Philip IV. he was promoted to the diocese of Osma; led an exemplary life; died with a high reputation of sanctity; and obtained a place among the beatified. He would have remained quiet in this lower rank of the celestial hierarchy; but the animosity of the court of Madrid against the Jesuits suddenly created an interest in favour of one of their most inveterate enemies; and the canonisation of the venerable Palafox, which was

only calculated to gratify the vanity of his family, or to amuse the leisure of devotees, became an affair of state. Scarcely had Charles III. expelled the Jesuits from his dominions, when he requested it with the greatest earnestness. Clement XIV. dying without having been able to satisfy the desire of the catholic king, the first mark of obsequiousness required of his successor was to hasten *this important decision*. He made a show of compliance, but Jesuitical intrigues prolonged delay, accumulated obstacles, and thus favoured the secret repugnance of Pius VI. More important affairs called off the attention of the court of Spain. Charles III. died, and was succeeded by his son, who inherited not only his throne, but his piety and his prejudices against the Jesuits. One of the first requests that he made of the sovereign pontiff was the canonisation of the venerable Palafox. The congregation *dei riti* collected all the documents that could throw a doubt upon his orthodoxy; among others his correspondence with the university of Louvain. These were valuable materials for the personage, who, in the ridiculous language of canonisations, was called *the devil's advocate*. The cabal profited by them; and Palafox, notwithstanding the interest taken by Spain in his posthumous glory, was for a long time reduced to



the humbler honours of beatification. The Jesuits alone were sensible of this obscure triumph.

They obtained, however, less contested successes, which proved a source of trouble to the unfortunate Pius VI. whose secret wishes were constantly at variance with his ostensible engagements. Who could have foreseen that the society of Jesus, banished from the countries devoted to superstition, would find an asylum and undisguised protection among heretics and schismatics? Two sovereigns, perhaps the most distinguished of the eighteenth century for their wisdom and talents for government, considered it as a kind of point of honour to receive into their dominions the wreck of the proscribed society. They saw in its members neither the professors of a corrupt system of morality, dangerous to subjects, and still more dangerous to kings, nor intriguers, making religion serve as the mask and instrument of their ambition. They saw in them nothing but enlightened men, proper, in many respects, for public instruction. Determined to watch over their conduct; to keep them within bounds; and to admit them neither into their courts nor into their confessionals, how could they look upon them in a dangerous light? Such, no doubt, was the reasoning of Frederic the Great, and of the Imperial Catherine.

Frederic II. who had a great many catholics in his dominions, could not avoid keeping up some intercourse with the Holy See; and had an agent constantly resident at Rome. This was the abbé Ciofani, a man much devoted to the society of Jesus. His principal wish was to restore it to its pristine situation; the great object of his mission to obtain a decision concerning the establishment of the Jesuits in some of the provinces of the Prussian monarchy. Would any one believe that the great Frederic intimated to the pope, that, as he had not been consulted concerning the suppression of the order, he had a right to consider that event as never having taken place, and totally to disregard it, by leaving the Jesuits in his dominions upon the same footing as before? It will readily be believed, that the abbé Ciofani neither softened the expression of Frederic's discontent, nor transmitted to him very faithfully the circumspect answers which he obtained from the pope. The king of Prussia was resolved to retain the Jesuits in his kingdom, in order to employ them in the education of youth. It was of little consequence to him whether they were faithful or not to their vows, and to the statutes of their order; but he wished them to be contented, and to live with him in the way most agreeable to his views. Deceived, no doubt, by his agent, or feigning to be so, he

affirmed, in a public declaration, that the sovereign pontiff would not oppose the preservation of the society in Prussia; and when this declaration was communicated to the pope, the latter said, according at least to the abbé Ciofani, “that it was not in his power to rescind the decision of his predecessor, on account of the powerful opposition of the catholic courts; but that he *solemnly* promised that he never would declare the society forming in Prussia to be an irregular establishment.”

Informed of this singular promise, the ministers of France and Spain reproached Pius VI. in the strongest terms, and charged him with duplicity. The pope excused himself in the best way he was able; pretended that his words had been misinterpreted; and renewed his engagements. He behaved to his severe tutors with an appearance at least of tractability; and never fawned more upon the cardinal de Bernis than after having received a reprimand. He was still more afraid of the minister of Spain, whose court was more peremptory and punctilious than that of Versailles, and who was himself far more irritable than the cardinal de Bernis. No wonder then if Pius VI. experienced a joyful sensation, which he found it difficult to disguise, when M. de Florida Blanca was recalled to Madrid in 1777, to take upon him the principal admini-



stration of affairs. Spain was then represented at Rome by the duke of Grimaldi, who succeeded count de Florida Blanca, and by the chevalier Azara, who had been long in Italy, honoured with the confidence of his court, to which he had such a variety of claims. But the pope soon saw that he had gained nothing by a change, on which he had at first congratulated himself. The duke of Grimaldi, an honest and well meaning man, but easy to be misled, and seeing every thing with the eyes of his relation Pallavicini, appeared to adhere to the party opposed to the two crowns, and inspired it with new hopes. But his embassy was little less than an honourable retreat, in which it was meant that he should enjoy *otium cum dignitate*. He was frequently absent; but the chevalier Azara did not for a moment lose sight of the Holy See. His vigilance and his firmness were often troublesome; but he joined to his austere counsels marks of kindness, which conciliated at once the good-will and the confidence of the pope; and it may now be said that his influence, and that of the cardinal de Bernis, with whom he always lived upon terms of the greatest intimacy, saved Pius VI. from the commission of many faults, and contributed, perhaps, to delay the subversion of the papal throne.

As to the king of Prussia, he was determined

to retain the Jesuits in his dominions in some shape or other. In a letter, which he wrote as long ago as the year 1775, to one of the society then at Breslau, he expressed himself to this effect: "They may depend upon my protection. Neither the pope, nor any one else, has a right to prescribe rules for my conduct. I promised the Imperial court, in the last treaty of peace, that I would maintain the catholic clergy in the state in which I found it. I will keep my word; and if every one else chooses to consult nothing but his own pleasure, I, for my part, will drive all the rest of the priesthood out of my dominions, and keep you Jesuits alone." A letter written to M. d'Alembert, about the same time, when he was recovering from an illness which had nearly cost him his life, contains the following passage: "I have lived long enough to see strange things come to pass. I have seen the pope's soldiers wear my uniform; the Jesuits choose me for their general; and Voltaire write like an old woman."

It was not, however, out of any malevolent obstinacy that he protected the Jesuits. "I have," he was accustomed to say, "a million and a half of catholics among my subjects. It is of consequence to me that they should be brought up strictly and uniformly in the religion of their forefathers. The Jesuits have given

“ proofs of their talents for education ; and it is  
 “ only by existing in a body that their task can  
 “ be properly fulfilled, I am determined, then,  
 “ that they shall so exist, upon condition of their  
 “ submitting, in other respects, to the ecclesi-  
 “ astical laws which the pope may think fit to  
 “ prescribe.” Pius VI., in order to avoid giving  
 offence to the catholic courts, required that  
 they should lay aside the habit of their order,  
 which they continued to wear in Silesia ; and  
 that they should abstain from preaching and ad-  
 ministering the sacrament. At the beginning of  
 1776 the bishop of Breslau communicated to them  
 the intentions of the pope, which were also  
 those of the king of Prussia. They obeyed ; but  
 new storms arose on their account in the other  
 parts of Europe, where they flattered themselves  
 with the enjoyment of a less equivocal existence.  
 Pius VI. tormented by France and Spain, as-  
 sumed from time to time, in regard to the so-  
 ciety, an intolerant language, which was foreign  
 to his heart. Those in particular, who were in  
 Polish Prussia, gave rise to complaints, because  
 they continued to live together according to  
 monastic rules. But Frederic explained himself,  
 on this occasion, in such a way as to stop the  
 pontiff’s mouth : “ I will consent,” said he, in a  
 letter written in 1779 to the bishop of Culm, in  
 whose diocese the Jesuits were established ; “ I



will consent to sacrifice their name and habit to the will of the pope ; but as to the essential part of their institution it shall remain untouched, and upon the same footing as in Silesia, in order to favour the improvement of the youth committed to their care."

It was thus that the company of Jesus continued to exist in Polish Prussia and in Silesia. This was quite enough to prevent the partisans of that too-famous society from losing all hope ; and gave them room to say—the Jesuits are persecuted, dispersed, and suppressed ; but not annihilated. The catholic courts familiarised themselves by degrees with this exception ; but their vigilance was only the more active to hinder the Jesuits from obtaining farther triumphs. As to Frederic II. he readily pardoned Pius VI. the transient opposition which he had experienced, and with the source of which he was well acquainted. He even retained for that pontiff, whose faults were often imputable to himself, still oftener to circumstances, a kind affection, which manifested itself on several occasions, when he saw him engaged in a contest with Joseph II., who undertook to make reforms, justified by sound policy, but afflicting to the church. He wrote to M. d'Alembert as follows : " The only thing that vexes me is, that all this good " was not done under popes who merited hu-

"miliation; and that it should have been reserved precisely for the worthy Braschi; the man who has drained the Pontine marshes."

Independently of his personal affection for Pius VI., he attached more importance to the keeping up of a friendly connexion with the Holy See than could have been expected from a prince so superior to empty formalities. The title of king, which the elector of Brandenburg had only borne since the beginning of the century, had not yet been acknowledged by the popes; and he wished to make that acknowledgment the object of a sort of negotiation. During the time that Pius VI. was at Vienna, the baron de Reidesel, the Prussian minister there, applied for it personally to the pope, and obtained it in a private audience. Upon his return to Rome, he began to give the title of king, in his briefs, to the great Frederic. It may be made a question, which of the two was the most honoured by this favour? Count Hertzberg, who knew how to set a just value upon it, as well as his master, but who did not, however, deem it unworthy solicitation, thought no doubt that it was calculated to increase the king of Prussia's consequence in the eyes of his catholic subjects; and that nothing, having that tendency, ought to be overlooked.

## CHAPTER IV.

*Troublesome Disputes of Pius VI. with CATHERINE II.*

AMONG the singular occurrences that distinguish the end of the present century, few are more worthy of remark than the violent expulsion of the Jesuits by the most pious monarchs of Christendom; their proscription, however reluctant, by the Holy See; and the kind reception they met with from two philosophical sovereigns; one a heretic, and the other a schismatic. Frederic the Great, and Catherine II., equally intent upon extraordinary things, thought they should throw a new ray of glory upon their reign, by protecting the illustrious victims of oppression; by welcoming to their dominions men renowned for their talents; and by redressing the wrongs they had suffered from the spirit of persecution. The motives of their determination were, perhaps, combined with a feeling of ill-will towards those pious sovereigns who drove away the ablest champions of their holy religion, and with a proud desire to prove that the dangers, which had served as a pretence for that important measure, were such as could alarm only pusillanimous minds. But they were



still more strongly impelled by the desire to give to public instruction, in their respective states, a form which, whatever may since have been said of it, had certainly received the sanction of experience in several catholic countries. They were both too wise to take such a step merely through malice or out of ostentation.

However this may be, such of the Ex-Jesuits as had not taken refuge in the ecclesiastical state had sought and obtained an asylum in countries of which the sovereigns, though independent of the church of Rome, reckoned a number of catholics among their subjects: some retired to Polish Prussia; some to Silesia; and others to White Russia. They were living peaceably in the latter province, when a noble Lithuanian, bishop of Mallo *in partibus*, who was resident at Mohilow, with the title of apostolical visitor, and who, from thence, kept up a constant correspondence with the numerous friends of the society at Rome, thought proper most strangely to exceed the powers given him by the pope. He permitted the Jesuits of White Russia to take novices, in conformity, as he said, with *the intentions of Clement XIV. and of Pius VI.* Pius VI. was dangerously ill; and the cardinals, tired of the length of his reign (it had already lasted more than four years), looked to its speedy close. Now was the moment to give, in a

distant quarter, the signal for the resurrection of the Jesuits. Before the demand that would have been made could be publicly known, Pius VI. would be no more. His successor, whatever his principles might be, would find it a settled thing; it would be represented as the work of the deceased pope; and might, perhaps, be respected by the catholic courts, who would be afraid of exposing the church to new dangers. Those who were the most exasperated against the Jesuits were at a great distance; and their murmurs might be disregarded, and rendered of no avail.

The event baffled all conjecture. Pius VI. recovered; and his convalescence was greeted by the most severe remonstrances on the part of the ministers of France and Spain. They reproached him with the ambiguous manner in which the powers given to the bishop of Mallo had been worded. That daring prelate was born a Calvinist; turned Catholic at the death of his father; married; was left a widower; entered into holy orders; began from that moment to act the apostle; made Warsaw the centre of his pious labours; found means to interest in his favour the Russian ministers who were all-powerful there; gained the friendship of Garraffi, the pope's nuncio, a zealous partisan of the Jesuits; was, upon his guarantee, and the

formal demand of Russia, appointed bishop *in partibus*; and immediately assumed the title of bishop of Mohilow and of White Russia. Such was this adventurer, who played the part of a fanatic, though he hardly believed in God. He involved Pius VI. in one of the greatest embarrassments which he ever experienced; prevailed upon the Imperial Catherine to espouse his cause with a tenacity and haughtiness which she seemed to reserve only for affairs of the highest importance; and occupied Europe for several years with the consequences of his ignoble intrigue.

But what could he have done if he had not met with powerful support even at Rome itself? The brief, of which he had made so improper a use, had been drawn up by Borgia, secretary to the *propaganda*, an artful prelate, whose affections were well known; and (as was often the case with the precepts of our bishops) had not even been read by Pius VI. His confusion was only the greater, and his perplexity not the less. What could he do to appease France and Spain, without offending Catherine II., without irritating her against the catholics in her dominions? He was required, however, to disavow in the most formal manner the conduct of the bishop of Mallo, and to threaten him with canonical penalties, if he did not hasten to recal his mandate. Nothing was neglected to extort that revoca-



tion. Spain solicited it directly at Petersburg, where at that moment she was not in favour, on account of the recent stoppage of some Russian ships. The imperious Catherine answered; through the medium of Czernichew, that as the king of Spain had, doubtless, had his reasons for expelling the Jesuits from his territories, she had her's for retaining them in her empire. The intercession of the king of Poland was employed. Catherine answered him in her own hand-writing: "I thank you for your interposition," said she; "but as the affair in question is merely æconomical, I stand in need neither of mediation nor treaty. I am certainly mistress in my own dominions." Stanislaus returned to the charge; and Catherine replied; "I will maintain the ordinance of the bishop of Mohilow, which has received my approbation; and if the pope proceed against him, I will protect him. I will rather consent to a schism, than to make any change to the establishment of the Jesuits in White Russia." It was not, however, that she felt any great affection for the Jesuits. She knew how little they were worth, bating their talents for public instruction; but she was piqued, and her ill-humour carried her beyond the limits prescribed by her intentions, as well as by her interest.

There was at that time at Warsaw a nuncio

(Archetti) of a mild and conciliating disposition, who undertook to disarm the resentment of the great Catherine, and to spare the pope any farther mortification. He obtained permission to convey to him some obliging expressions.

The courts of Madrid and Versailles ceased to act in a direct manner. They were engaged in concerns of far higher importance; for this was the period in which they were making preparations for their war with England. They contented themselves therefore with harassing the feeble pontiff, who, by dint of temporising, and under favour of circumstances, extricated himself from this critical situation better than he could have hoped. But how much torture must he have previously endured?

In consequence of the solicitations of the catholic courts, he requested that the brief for the suppression of the Jesuits might be published in Russia. This was an expedient for annihilating the work of the prelate of Mohilow. In order to succeed, he had recourse to a system of wheedling, against which the great Catherine was not entirely proof. Till then the sovereign of Russia was not considered by the Holy See as invested with the dignity of emperor. Pius VI. wrote to Catherine, and, for the first time, intitled her, *Her Imperial Majesty*. Her vanity was flattered; her answer was kind, and almost affec-

tionate; but she remained inexorable as to the brief of suppression. In vain did the pope point out to her the example of the king of Prussia. Every sovereign, answered she, is master in his own dominions; and never, while I am alive, shall a bull be published in mine. This transient smile of benevolence soon gave place to a new paroxysm of ill-humour. Surely nothing but the influence of the unlucky planet, under which Pius VI. was born, could have engaged him in such frequent and such unpleasant disputes with schismatic princes, whose states were so far distant from his own. Believing Catherine a little softened, he wrote to her a ceremonious letter, to request that the archbishopric of Poloczko, which made part of her empire, should, according to custom, be intrusted to an *united Greek*. Catherine, still piqued at the molestation given to her *protégé*, answered the pope; but she did it in the Russian language, annexing a Greek translation to her letter; measuring her answer, line for line, by the pope's epistle; concluding in the same words as he had done; and putting at the head of it, *Catherine II., empress of all the Russias, to Pius VI. bishop of Rome, and pope in his own district*. The contents of this letter were answerable to the form. It was neither obliging to the pope, nor favourable to his request; to which Catherine would accede only upon con-



dition that the see of Mohilow should be erected into an archbishopric, and given to the bishop of Mallo. Hence new sources of chagrin and embarrassment to Pius VI. How was he to extricate himself from this difficulty? If he kept no measures with the empress he would be the occasion of five hundred thousand *united* Greeks, scattered throughout the Russian empire, being lost to the Holy See. But how, on the other hand, could he brave the anger of the courts of Versailles and Madrid, whose ministers required a solemn recantation from the bishop of Mallo, previously to his obtaining the favour solicited for him by the empress?

Resolving, towards the end of 1781, to make a new attempt to appease her wrath, he represented to her, in a lamentable tone, that he could not, without degrading himself, and without incurring a charge of weakness and pusillanimity, recompense a prelate who had dared to put a false construction upon one of his briefs, and to attack the bull of suppression; but let him only retract, and he should consider it as his duty to comply with the desire of the empress. At this time the journey of the count and countess du Nord was in agitation. Pius VI. testified the concern he took in their welfare; and recommended to her the catholics of Russia. The letter was entirely in his own hand-writing, and

full of the most flattering expressions. It was prelate, afterwards cardinal Antonelli, whom he had employed to compose it; and Antonelli was artful and insinuating, and was already in possession of the confidence of Pius VI. as much as it was possible for any one to be.

Catherine, who often blended the coquetry of her sex with an imperious display of her power, began her answer by a flattering preamble. She spoke to him of her children; and praised him for his successful efforts to drain the Pontine marshes; and for thus insuring his own glory, and the prosperity of his dominions; but when she came to the point, she said that she had availed herself of her right, in conferring upon the bishop of Mallo the archbishopric of Mohilow; that no just reproach could be brought against that prelate; and that he had only obeyed her like a subject submissive to the will of his sovereign. She concluded by soliciting the pall\* for him, without saying a word of his recantation. *At the same time we join our voice to that of our orthodox church, which prays God for the reunion of all.*

This grave negotiation, which no doubt served Catherine and her courtiers as matter of amuse-

\* An ornament which the pope sends to archbishops as a mark of their dignity.

ment, was suspended for some time by a somewhat more serious quarrel between the pope and Joseph II., and by the former's journey to Vienna. The affair of Mohilow was, however, recalled to the recollection of Pius VI. during his stay in that capital. Joseph spoke to him with enthusiasm of Catherine II.; exhorted him earnestly to gratify her; and pointed out the inutility, and even the danger, of resistance. The poor pontiff returned to Rome, more undecided than ever: and on his arrival there was again beset by the remonstrances of his tutors, the French and Spanish ministers. They distrusted his firmness, and even his intentions; but became somewhat more moderate in their demands, only requiring him to address a declaration to each of the two kings, stating anew that he considered the suppression of the Jesuits as irrevocable.

Pius VI. begged they would be contented with the disapprobation he had expressed of the conduct of the bishop of Mallo, through the medium of his nuncio at Warsaw.

But in the mean time a new incident had occurred, tending to increase his perplexity, in an affair that had already given him so much uneasiness. Catherine II. impatient of delay, perhaps vexed at the kind of homage which she had paid to the head of a church distinct from her own; excited against him by Czernichew, the



great professor of the refractory prelate; by prince Potemkin, whom pride and the rest of the worldly passions did not prevent from casting a look of kindness upon a religious order; and by the harsh and haughty Stackelberg, who was irritated by the slightest resistance; Catherine II. had granted the Jesuits in her dominions the power of electing a vicar-general to preside over the society, *with all the privileges which that institution formerly enjoyed*; provided only that they were compatible with the laws of her empire; and, without waiting any longer for the consent of the Holy See, she intitled the bishop of Mallo archbishop of Mohilow, of the *Roman church*.

Stackelberg, on his part, declared, that Catherine II. absolutely refused to comply with the demands of the pope; and that if he did not immediately send the pall to the bishop of Mallo, and at the same time appoint an Ex-Jesuit, towards whom she was favourably disposed, to be his coadjutor, she would expel all the catholics from her dominions, and proscribe their religion as incompatible with the dignity and authority of sovereigns. The Russian minister, who did not say a single word of the appointment of an *united Greek* to the archbishopric of Poloczko, sent a copy of his declaration to Vienna, in order that the court of Rome might not fail to be informed of it by Garampi, its nuncio. Never was weakness

treated by arrogance with a greater want of feeling. At Warsaw the nuncio Archetti was struck with consternation; at Versailles, and even at Madrid, great concern was felt for the unfortunate pontiff, who was expiating a thoughtless moment in so painful a manner; while at Rome enlightened observers foresaw the approaching fall of a throne, stripped on every side of those illusions in which alone its solidity consisted.

Pius VI. was no longer sensible to any thing but the dread with which he was inspired by the distant wrath of Catherine. He was in hopes that the kings of France and Spain would be contented with the brief addressed to each of them, by which he declared every thing that had been done contrary to the bull of Clement XIV. either in White Russia or elsewhere, to be *illegal, abusive, and of no effect*; that the two monarchs, engaged in concerns of greater importance, would require nothing more; and that nothing would be wanting to the triumph of Catherine's *protégé*.

Nor was this all. It was necessary to appease the august protectress. Pius VI. wrote to her again in the following terms: "You will have some regard for my dignity; you will not allow it to be said that one of your subjects has offended me with impunity. Well, I will

send a minister authorised to convert the see of Mohilow into an archbishopric, and to deliver the pall to the new archbishop; but your Imperial majesty must suffer me to add to these proofs of deference this single clause: *without prejudice to the maxims of the Roman catholic church.*

In the mean time Benilawski, the Ex-Jesuit, who was to be the coadjutor of the new archbishop, set off for Italy at the beginning of 1783, in order, as it would seem, to set the Holy See more completely at defiance. In every place through which he passed he flattered his friends with the speedy re-establishment of the Jesuits. He shewed rescripts, already of old date, in which Pius VI. permitted them to remain in *statu quo*, wherever the bull of suppression had not been published. He arrived at Rome, and obtained from the pope a first audience, the particulars of which transpired, and alarmed the two catholic ministers. Cardinal de Bernis endeavoured to enforce his old claims upon the tractability and confidence of the pontiff; but he found him terrified and overawed; and heard him make with his own mouth the apology of the bishop of Mallo. Benilawski was introduced by the agent of Russia, and recommended to him by count Panin. How then could he do otherwise than give him a gracious reception?

As yet, however, Pius VI. was only begin-



ning to give way. Benilawski, who, under the meanest exterior, concealed a great share of effrontery and address, spared nothing to intimidate and to corrupt him. He was authorised by the empress of Russia to require that the pope should formally acknowledge the Jesuits established in her empire; and that he should grant to those who were employed in the ecclesiastical ministry the same powers as to bishops. He endeavoured to justify the bishop of Mallo in every respect. Pius VI. deliberated; shifted his ground; and would have yielded but for the austere counsels of cardinal de Bernis. Benilawski grew pressing; declared that he would set off immediately, if kept any longer in suspense, and was constantly at the heels of the pontiff. Pius VI. avoided him. The impudent monk then declared that he would not stir from the anti-chamber till the pope should admit him, and acquiesce in all his demands. His vanity and imprudence were equal to his effrontery. He thought himself so sure of the dignity of prelate, that he purchased the cross and pastoral ring before-hand; had himself painted in the episcopal habit; and boasted that he was about to be ordained by the pope in person. He connected himself closely with Zaccaria and Ambrogio, the two Ex-Jesuits the most remarkable for their fanaticism; and held out his sovereign's

resentment as a threat. Pius VI. resisted like a man prepared to yield. It was easy to see that, being in his nature a slave to fear, he only exchanged his dread of the house of Bourbon for a still greater awe of Catherine II.; and that the more readily, as the latter sentiment did not ill accord with his secret affections.

In the mean time he received Catherine's answer to his submissive letter; and his vanity had a few moments of enjoyment, which consoled him for every thing. The empress called him *most puissant prince*; and thanked him for the good grace with which he had been pleased to bestow the pall upon a man of such great merit as the bishop of Mallo, whom she had *confirmed* archbishop of Mohilow, giving him for his coadjutor the canon Benilawski. She would receive, she said, the minister whom his holiness meant to send to her court, in like manner as she did *the ambassadors of crowned heads*. She even spoke to him of the gratitude she should feel in case of his attending to her request; but all the rest she passed over in silence. She concluded by saying, that she constantly addressed her prayers to heaven for the union of the church of Rome with *her orthodox church*.

This return of the empress's favour restored some little courage to the holy father. He dismissed Benilawski politely, but coldly, and with-

out having granted any thing to his importunity; his direct intercourse with the great Catherine exempting him from all necessity of negotiating with her ridiculous agent.

But immediately afterwards, Archetti, the nuncio, received orders to set off for Peterburgh; and his mission gave rise to a new storm. The bishop of Mallo had accompanied Potemkin to the Crimea. He was sent for to Peterburgh, where he found Archetti, who was dispatched thither principally on his account by the pope. A nuncio at the extremity of the Baltic sea, accredited at the court of a schismatic, and, what was worse, a philosophical prince! This was indeed a novel spectacle; and Archetti might have said, like a certain doge of Genoa, the most remarkable thing I see at Petersburgh is to see myself there. He was at first well received; but it soon appeared that he expressed himself with too much bitterness when speaking of the Jesuits. He was also blamed for going to envenom his hatred against them in the society of the Spanish minister. From the very outset the negotiation was obstructed by a number of little difficulties; Catherine II. wishing to obtain every thing from the pope before she granted him any thing whatever. In the first place it was necessary to attend to the consecration of the new archbishop of Mohilow. Archetti



being questioned relative to the kind of oath which that prelate would be expected to take, answered, that he must swear *not to tolerate heretics and schismatics*. However strange such a condition may appear, it existed in the nuncio's instructions; from which he could not venture to depart. He was bluntly told, that those instructions betrayed *a want of sense and of reflection*; that it was ridiculous to impose upon a subject the obligation of persecuting those who lived under the same sovereign as himself; and that as long as such a thing was in question, the empress would not appoint an *united Greek* to the see of Polockzo. At length, however, every thing was arranged. The nuncio was authorised to pass over the ridiculous oath in silence; and Mohilow was erected into an archbishopric, and conferred by the empress upon the bishop of Mallo. Archetti extolled him to the skies, and consecrated him, as well as his coadjutor, Benilawski; and, in all these formalities, the name of the Jesuits was not once pronounced. The only thing that Pius VI. did for the satisfaction of the catholic crowns, who were pleased to insist upon no more, was formally to except all the religious orders, whose existence and institution were not approved of by the Holy See, when he was renewing the powers of the

new archbishop of Mohilow, in regard to the regular clergy of his vast diocese.

The Jesuits, nevertheless, considered Archetti's mission as a triumph. The vicar-general of that order dying in the course of 1785, they inserted a notice of it in the Warsaw Gazette, accompanying it with all the details of their establishment in Russia; and observing that the bull of suppression could have no effect in the states in which it had not been published. The next year they did more. To all the libels which they had circulated, in order to frighten some, and to revive the courage of others, they added a new one, in which they endeavoured to prove the continuation of their society in White Russia, and insinuated that the Holy See favoured their success.

The catholic courts renewed their complaints, and obtained nothing but vain protestations. The pope began to be familiar with war; and appeared little moved by the intrigues of the Jesuits, or by the accusations to which they gave birth. Without offending the crowns, with which he wished to remain in amity, in too direct a manner; he had reconciled himself to the great Catherine; and had kept up a political connection with her in the face of all Europe. He had insured her powerful protection to five hundred thousand of

his flock, lost in the vast empire of Russia. His vanity was gratified, his conscience was at rest.

The empress of Russia, who lost no opportunity of throwing every kind of lustre upon her reign, pleased herself with the idea of seeing a prelate seated in the Sacred College upon her recommendation. Archetti, the nuncio, had been sent to her court upon a mission, with the result of which she had reason to be satisfied. A cardinal's hat was to be his reward. She requested the pope to bestow one on him; but he was fearful of offending the catholic powers, who alone had the right of nominating cardinals. Some futile distinctions, however, saved their pretensions; and Archetti was appointed cardinal out of the regular course, while he was still at Petersburg. Catherine conceived the whimsical idea of investing him with the scarlet with her own hand. Scrupulous persons were scandalised at the idea; but, at Rome in particular, *there are ways of coming to a compromise with heaven.* A schismatic prince invests a nuncio with the *insignia* of the cardinalate! And why not, said the subtle reasoners, who would not have been sorry to see this new honour conferred upon the Sacred College: *the cardinalate is a dignity, and not a character.*



The vanity of the college was, however, deprived of this little triumph; Archetti, on his return to Warsaw, receiving the hat with the usual formalities. Catherine had manifested, in the promotion of cardinal Archetti, that perseverance which she employed in all her enterprises. She spared nothing to overcome the opposition which she dreaded on the part of the catholic crowns, and the still more formidable weakness of the sovereign pontiff. M. Markow was beginning to acquire the favour of the empress, and did not avail himself of it in the most modest manner. She sent him on a mission to the pope. When Pius VI. heard of that negotiator's arrival in Italy, he felt an emotion of alarm, expecting from Catherine II. nothing but extravagant demands. Was she preparing for him some new embarrassment? He already feared lest, to fill up the measure of his humiliation, the Russian envoy should be charged to solicit a cardinal's hat for the new archbishop of Mohilow. He was deceived. The object of Markow's mission was merely to urge the promotion of Archetti to the cardinalate. As soon as it was determined upon, prince Yasoupoff was sent to Rome to thank the pope. He staid there several months on another account. He was extremely desirous of executing a project conceived long before; a project of which the exe-

cution would have flattered the pride of Catherine, and have gratified the vanity of Pius VI. still more than his piety: this was the union of the Greek and Latin churches, to which there seemed no great objection; but the low passions often triumph over interests of the highest importance; and the attempt failed, like all those that had preceded it.

The disputes of Catherine II. with the sovereign pontiff had, at least, restored a sort of existence to the Jesuits. They affected to consider the service she had rendered them as more important than it really was. Faithful to the ambitious plans which followed them beyond the tomb, these priests, who flattered the earthly powers when they could neither terrify nor subjugate them, continued during the whole course of her reign to worship her as their benefactress. In the year 1780, when she made a journey to Mohilow, and condescended to visit the college for which they were indebted to her munificence, they received her with the strongest demonstrations of gratitude. In the Latin discourse, which they addressed to her, the verses, commemorative of the asylum their society had found in her dominions, were particularly noticed:

*Tot pulsata malis, tot tempestatibus acta,  
Expoliata bonis, patris sedibus exsul,  
Felix quod mediis hunc portum nacta procellis.*

In fact, the Jesuits were constantly protected in the asylum that had been granted to them at Mohilow, Polockzo, &c. They lived there according to their monastic rules; they were allowed to take novices; their colleges were frequented by young men of the most distinguished families in Lithuania and Russia; and nothing was wanting to their complete resurrection, the object of all their hopes and of all their intrigues, but the formal acknowledgment of Pius VI. It was in the midst of his vexatious negotiation with the empress of Russia, on account of the archbishop of Mohilow, that the grand duke and grand duchess made their appearance in Italy. This afforded him a favourable opportunity of conciliating, by their means, the good-will of their mother. Such visits were always agreeable; and this might be useful to him. He redoubled his attentions to the illustrious foreigners. Although they travelled *incognito* under the title of count and countess du Nord, he ordered the most distinguished honours to be paid them in all the cities of his dominions. They arrived at Rome on the 4th of February 1782. On the following morning, when, according to custom, he was descending from the Vatican, in order to go and pray at the feet of the image of St. Peter, they placed themselves, as if by chance, in his way; conversed with him for an hour and a half



in the most affectionate manner; waited till he had finished his prayer; accosted him a second time; and were sparing of nothing that could flatter his vanity. A prince and princess, destined to fill the throne of the north, holding an amicable conference with the head of the catholic church, at nine hundred leagues distance from their native country, afforded a spectacle new to the eighteenth century. The most minute particulars of this interview are recorded in the newspapers of that time, where we shall leave them. The count and countess du Nord made a stay of only a few days at Rome; but they returned thither on the 23d of February, in their way back from Naples; and were witnesses to the pope's departure for Vienna. Before he proceeded on his journey, he indicated the presents he intended for them. Besides some valuable pieces of mosaic, and other curiosities, which pontifical munificence generally distributes to illustrious travellers, a faithful copy was delivered to them of Trajan's column in *lapis-lazuli*. The bas-reliefs of silver gilt were sculptured with infinite art; and the pedestal contained a time-piece richly ornamented. The workmanship alone cost six thousand ducats. Such magnificence may dazzle for a moment: it may become the subject of conversation for a few days in the remote regions of the north; but

thus it is that a sovereign ruins his finances, provokes the discontent of his subjects, and saps the foundation of his throne.—Catherine II. appeared grateful for the reception given to her children by the pope ; but persisted nevertheless in her projects ; the archbishop of Mohilow, and the Jesuits, continued to be no less openly protected ; and Pius VI. failed in the attainment of his object, or at least of that which he pretended to have in view.

## CHAPTER V.

*Of the Jesuits, and of the venerable Labre.*

THE intrigues of the Jesuits were interwoven with the whole pontificate of Pius VI. and were re-produced in every variety of form. Strangers, as in the days of their prosperity, to all scruples, they availed themselves of every circumstance that occurred. They employed by turns ascetic books and calumnious libels; the illusions of superstition, and the light of philosophy; making every thing subservient to their purpose, from the atheist to the capuchin friar, and from the sovereign to the beggar in the streets.

The year 1783 was witness to the development of one of their most abject, and, at the same time, most ridiculous plans.

In the course of the month of April, while Pius VI. was on a visit to the Pontine marshes, a report was suddenly spread in Rome of the death of a French beggar, who was become the object of public veneration. His body, which was exposed for three days, preserved, it was said, the flexibility of its members, without



shewing the least sign of putrefaction. He had lived nine years at Rome unnoticed by every one; but no sooner had he closed his eyes, than the most edifying wonders were related of him. He had led the most pious and most exemplary life. Reduced to the lowest degree of indigence, he added voluntary sufferings to his unavoidable privations; covered with rags, he remained exposed to the inclemency of the weather, and, by way of penance, suffered the vermin to prey upon his flesh. Many persons recollected to have seen him stand motionless in the streets, and at the doors of the churches, expecting, without asking, the charity of passengers. It was said, that he was accustomed to distribute the surplus of the alms he received to other paupers, and that he had predicted the moment of his death. The greatest personages in Rome, the populace, and above all the priests, hastened in crowds to his tomb where a great number of miracles were performed. The sick were carried thither: they returned healed; and these wonders, as always happens, were attested by numerous and creditable witnesses. The most minute particulars of his life were collected; his portrait was engraved; and in less than twenty-four hours more than four thousand impressions were sold. While waiting for canonisation, the title of *venerable* was adjudged to him. Men of

observing minds were not long before they perceived that this was a competitor, set up by the Jesuitical party, in opposition to the venerable Palafox, whose speedy canonisation the court of Spain was, at that moment, soliciting out of hatred to the Jesuits. It was the heads of that party who appeared to concern themselves the most about the beatified beggar. In the absence of the pope, the cardinal-vicar gravely countenanced the disgusting farce; and, at the end of three days exhibition, ordered the holy mendicant to be pompously interred in a vault constructed on purpose by the side of the principal altar of the church of *Madonna del Monte*. In his tomb was inclosed a brief notice of his life written in Latin, an Italian translation of which was profusely given away. In spite of the style of minute exaggeration, in which this singular piece of necrology was composed, means could not be found to render it interesting. It was confined to the few following facts.

“Benedict Joseph, son of J. B. Labre and of Anne-Barbe Granfir, was born on the 26th of March 1748, in the parish of St. Sulpice d’Anettes, in the diocese of Boulogne. After having passed his youth in the most orderly manner, under the care of an uncle, who was curate of Erin, he determined to devote himself to a life of penitence, and took the monastic habit in

the convent of Sept Fonts of the Cistercian order. The austerity of this mode of life occasioned a disease, which he suffered patiently ; but the physicians obliged him to lay aside the habit after a noviciate of eight months. He afterwards went on several pilgrimages, particularly to our lady of Loretto, and to the holy bodies of the apostles Peter and Paul. He then came and settled at Rome, which he never quitted, unless to go once a year to Loretto. He lived at Rome upon alms, of which he reserved but very little for himself, constantly giving the surplus to the poor. He led at the same time a very exemplary life, allowing himself only what was rigorously necessary for his food and raiment ; holding all worldly things in sovereign contempt ; and edifying mankind by the severe penance he imposed upon himself ; by the continual prayers which he offered up in the churches ; and by the other eminent virtues which he displayed. Although, while living thus, he appeared disgusting from the rags with which he was covered, he was, nevertheless, rendered *dear and amiable* to other men by his manners, forgetting himself and seeking only to please God. On the 16th of April 1783, after a long prayer in the church of *Madonna del Monte*, he was seized with a fainting fit, and carried to the house of a pious man, who hap-



pened to be there. His disorder growing worse, he received extreme unction, and, at an hour after midnight, departed this life. The following day his body was conveyed, with decent funeral ceremonies, at the expence of some good Christians, to the said church. The report of his death diffused itself throughout the city; and ere long, such an immense number of persons of all ranks hastened thither to see him, that it became necessary to call in the assistance of the military, to keep off the crowd. His body was thus exposed till the evening of Easter-day (the 20th of April), when it was attested by eye-witnesses, before a notary, that it was still *flexible, palpable, and free from putridity*. It was then put into a wooden coffin, which was sealed with the seal of the cardinal-vicar, inclosed in another coffin also of wood, and deposited in a vault, constructed on purpose, on the epistle side \* of the principal altar of the said church."

This monument of superstition and hypocrisy is worthy of preservation. It is well that posterity should know with what consummate impudence the priests imposed on the credulity of the people at the end of this enlightened cen-

\* In Roman catholic churches, the two sides of the church are distinguished by the terms, the gospel side, and the epistle side. T.

tury, in a city abounding with illustrious personages, with travellers from every part of Europe, and with master-pieces of art. It is well that posterity should be able to appreciate those factious knaves, who, disguising their worldly ambition under the mask of fanaticism, had the effrontery to engage heaven in a contest with earth; called upon the devout to pay homage to a vile mendicant, whose only merit, according to their own confession, was the having led a useless and disgusting life; and thus exposed to ridicule that religion of which they called themselves the supporters; and paved the way for its final overthrow.

Instead of the hand of God, the hand of the Jesuits was plainly visible in the whole of this affair. In order that the enthusiasm inspired by the new saint might not cool, a collection was made to defray the expenses of his beatification; and this pious care was entrusted by the cardinal-vicar to several persons of distinction at Rome, notorious for their attachment to the defunct society. Care was taken to inform all the friends it had in France of the miracles performed by the holy Labre, which wanted nothing but witnesses; and of his prophecies, which were only known to his confessor, and which threatened the Holy See with great calamities, that were about to follow the suppression

of the Jesuits. The bishop of Boulogne, one of their furious partisans, already announced to his flock, that they had another countryman in heaven, and recommended him to their devotion. He collected with scrupulous attention the most minute particulars of the life of the venerable Labre, both during his abode under the paternal roof, and after he quitted it. His relations, intoxicated with this unhopèd for honour, and little inclined to wait for the happiness that would thence result to them in heaven, already thought their fortune made upon earth; and solicited pensions and benefices; while the sage cardinal de Bernis, who knew not whether to laugh or weep at all these follies, saw a new article added to his diplomatic correspondence. He advised the enthusiastic admirers of the holy man to moderate their zeal; or at least to defer the expression of it, until it should be proved that their new idol was deserving of their worship. But at Rome nothing could repress the transports of devotion. To doubt the miracles of the blessed Labre was impiety. His revered images were profusely circulated; the pencil, the *burin*, and the chisel, emulated each other in producing them; and even the scraps of his ragged apparel became an object of contention. The pope himself, at a loss how to act; dreading the reproach of favouring Jesuitical intrigues,



and dreading still more the danger of opposing them openly, dared not refuse to join his pious homage to that which was lavished upon the relics of the holy mendicant; ordered the bedstead in which his disgusting limbs had been laid to be carried to the Vatican; and resolved to make it serve for the repose of his own.

In the mean time, information continued to be collected with regard to Benedict Labre as well at Rome as out of Italy. The whole of it did not prove to his advantage. It was even to be feared lest one of his letters sent to that capital of the Christian world by the bishop of Boulogne should throw a damp upon the fervour of the devout. In that letter Labre advised his parents to read the works of a certain father Lejeune. Now father Lejeune had been a disciple of father Quesnel. This affection for the productions of a Jansenist was a bad recommendation to the Jesuits; but they had advanced too far to retire without shame. What was of all things the most important to them was to find food for superstition; and the blessed Labre answered that purpose as well as any one else.

His credit was still more hurt by a rumour, that when solicited to receive extreme unction at the hour of death, he had made answer that *it was not necessary*. But what injured it more than all was the report made of him by the vicar of

his parish, who affirmed that, notwithstanding his entreaties, Labre would never consent to come to his church to receive the sacrament at Easter; and that his abstinence did not deserve to be so highly extolled, since it was well known that he often went to eat and drink at a neighbouring public-house, where nobody had been much edified by his frugality. It was also discovered, that his only confessor at Rome was the priest who declared himself the depositary of his prophecies, and who was notorious for his attachment to the Jesuits. In a short time, the latter were the only partisans he had at Rome; but that was a great deal. Their most active agent was an Ex-Jesuit of the name of *Zaccaria*, whom Pius VI. honoured with a share of his confidence. It was he who was charged to compose the life of Benedict Labre in two volumes; and to furnish a list of his pretended miracles. The pope, who never resisted with firmness the solicitations of the Jesuitical party, suffered himself to be persuaded to give a bookseller the exclusive privilege of printing the history of the *venerable's* life, and all the writings relative to his beatification. The congregation *dei Riti* was already engaged in that important task; and was anxious to abridge the customary formalities.

All these intrigues, and all these efforts, did not, however, produce the intended effect. The

bleſſed Labre was in vogue in thoſe countries only where the Jeſuits had a party. In Spain and Portugal his ſanctity and his miracles were objects of deriſion. In France, a few prelates alone endeavoured to bring him into faſhion; but in Rome, in that centre of religious mummery, he found for ſome time abundance of panegyriſts, and even of imitators. It was by no means uncommon to meet devotees in the ſtreets of that city begging like him; ragged, and motionleſs like him; and like him expecting alms from the paſſengers, but ſoliciting none.

Great pains continued to be taken to collect, upon the ſpot and elſewhere, every particular relative to his life. The moſt ſingular one is that to which amateurs are indebted for his much revered portrait. A French painter, of the name of Bley, who was at Rome in 1777, and who had it in contemplation to paint a picture of the calling of St. Peter, met at the corner of a ſtreet a young beggar, with a little red beard. He looked at him; and thought that his head might ſerve as a model for that of Chriſt. "Will you come to my lodgings, and be painted?" ſaid he to him in Italian. The beggar refuſed in a ſurly manner, and in an accent by which the painter knew him to be a foreigner.—"Are you a Frenchman?"—"Yes,



fir."—"In that case, you have it in your power to render a service to one of your countrymen. I wish to introduce the head of our Saviour in a picture I am painting, and am at a loss for a model. You would answer my purpose. Pray do me the favour to follow me."—The painter's entreaties, joined to the word *countryman*, overcame the beggar's reluctance.—"With all my heart," said he, "but upon condition that you do not keep me long."—"A single morning will suffice." Upon this they walked on; and upon their arrival at the artist's the beggar became as motionless as a statue. This was a part which he had been long accustomed to play. When the sitting was over a reward was offered him; but he obstinately refused it, and retired. The painter heard no more of him.

As he was not dissatisfied with his sketch, he preserved it in a port-folio, which he left at Lyons, in a journey that he made thither in 1782. During passion-week in 1783, a report was spread at Rome that a young French beggar, who enjoyed a high reputation for sanctity, was dead; that his body was exposed to public view, and attracted a prodigious crowd; and that miracles were ascribed to him. The painter had not curiosity enough to go and see him. He had something else to do. After the interment of the beggar, the concourse round his tomb,

and the miraculous result, were the same. One day a model \*, who was often employed by the artist, spoke to him of the dead man whom he had attentively surveyed. From the description he gave of him, the painter recollected his French acquaintance, sent to Lyons for his drawing, and ere long found his apartments crowded by the curious and the devout. All of them recognised the features of the venerable Labre. To satisfy the impatience of the public, he put his sketch into the hands of an Italian engraver, by whose means the portrait of the holy man was speedily dispersed all over the country.

This violent enthusiasm was not, however, of long duration. Before the year 1783 had elapsed, the *venerable* Labre was a little less spoken of; and the fame of his miracles was already upon the decline. All those ridiculous scenes which, in France, had been acted at the grave of Pâris, the deacon, were rehearsed round his tomb. The lame repaired thither to seek a cure; and notwithstanding their implicit faith, and the mummery of the priests, returned as lame as they went. No matter; his miracles were already numerous and incontestable; and what inference could be drawn from a few abortive cures. It

\* Model is the name given at Rome to the males and females who hire themselves to such artists as wish to study the human form after the life. T.

was the fault of the sick, and not that of the physician. The congregation *dei Riti* was not the less busy in the beatification of the pious beggar; but it was a work of time. It was necessary to collect information in all the places which the candidate had inhabited. It was necessary to have the most authentic testimonies. It was necessary to observe a number of slow and minute formalities; such, in short, as made it impossible for fraud to procure, for one of the profane, the reward that was reserved for the elect alone. It was necessary above all to have money; for the church of Rome afforded nothing gratuitously. This was one of the most scandalous remains of those superstitious times, when she imposed a tribute upon every species of folly. On some future day, indeed, it will scarcely be believed that she dared to disfigure those brilliant apotheoses, which she borrowed from the pagans, to such a degree as to put up to auction the seats she had to dispose of in the celestial court, and to knock them down, not to men known by their splendid virtues, by some great service rendered to their country, or at least by some illustrious crime, productive of a change in the condition of mankind; but most frequently to vile and indolent wretches, who ought at least to have been condemned to that obscurity to which they had devoted themselves.



The contributions, however, of credulity increased sufficiently in a few years for the congregation *dei Riti* to accelerate the first triumph of the venerable Labre. He was beatified in the course of the year 1792, when the country which had given him birth was already rescued from the clutches of superstition. Labre was then inrolled in the number of the blessed. There remained a still greater victory for him to obtain; that which was to procure him his insertion in the calendar of saints, in other words, his canonisation. But the ascent to this highest degree of celestial honours was difficult and tedious. There were a multitude of obstacles to be overcome. It was necessary that a century should elapse from the death of him for whom that signal favour was solicited; and it must be confessed, that in these latter times canonisations were become very unfrequent. None had been pronounced since the pontificate of Clement XIII. As to that of the blessed Labre, it is more than probable, that it is adjourned to an indefinite period.

## CHAPTER VI.

*Character of Pius VI.—His Taste for splendid Enterprises—His Vanity.*

IT is, above all, in the conduct of Pius VI. in regard to the Jesuits, that the principal traits of his character are perceptible. He never cordially acquiesced in their proscription. He was sensible that the Roman pontiff had lost in them the principal support of his power; but, at the same time, that their intriguing ambition might render them formidable. During the greater part of his reign they sometimes excited his regret, and sometimes his fears. He never dared either to protect or to persecute them openly. They were odious to the crowned heads, whose good-will it was so much his interest to conciliate. They increased the irresolution to which he was naturally inclined; and often obliged him to act with duplicity, the usual attendant upon weakness. This situation, which would have been embarrassing even to a mind far more energetic than his, gave birth to such a strange inconsistency of conduct, that those who for more than twenty years had observed him narrowly, could

not, at the moment of his fall, flatter themselves that they were thoroughly acquainted with his character. Heaven forbid, however, that we should wish to paint him in too odious colours. It would be unjust, even were he still in possession of his elevated rank. It would be base, after the catastrophe which has precipitated him from it. No; Pius VI. was neither wicked nor weak; but he had several glaring defects, which could not escape the least discerning eye; and caprices which formed a striking contrast with the majestic gravity of the part he had to play. Nobody denied him several brilliant qualities, considerable capacity, an agreeable turn of mind, manners at once noble and prepossessing, an easy and florid style of elocution, as much information as could be expected in a priest imbued with the principles of his profession, and a taste for the arts tolerably correct. Impatient, irascible, obstinate, and susceptible of prejudices, he was, however, neither obstinately rancorous, nor premeditatedly malevolent. Few instances can be quoted of his sensibility; many may be adduced of his good-nature. In less difficult circumstances, and with means proportioned to his views, he would, perhaps, have passed for a prudent sovereign. But his ruling passion was an excessive love of fame, which was the princi-



pal source of his faults and of his misfortunes. It was that love of fame, which, when not joined to a strong mind, often degenerates into puerile vanity. He would have wished to signalize his pontificate in every manner; and to associate his name with the most splendid enterprises. His vanity, which was apparent in every thing, drew upon him frequent mortifications. Descended from a family scarcely noble, he plumed himself, from the very beginning of his reign, upon his illustrious race. To the modest coat of arms of his ancestors, he added all the vain embellishments of blazonry; and composed an escutcheon which afforded ample room for ridicule. It is well known that the Italian people are more apt, perhaps, than any other, to lay hold of any thing ridiculous with merciless avidity. To two winds, of which the arms of his family consisted, he added an eagle, *fleurs-de-lys*, and stars. These pompous armorial bearings were cruelly criticised in the following distich:

Redde aquilam imperio, Francorum lilia regi,  
Sidera redde polo; cætera, Brasche, tua.

"Restore your eagle to the empire; his lilies to the king  
"of France; and the stars to heaven: the rest, Braschi, is  
"your own."

His arms, and his name, were repeated a

thousand times over in Rome, and in the rest of the ecclesiastical state. They are to be seen, not only upon the monuments which he erected, and upon such as he repaired, but even upon those in which he made the smallest change ; and unless Rome be utterly destroyed, the name of *Pius Sextus*, thanks to his provident vanity, will descend to the latest posterity. While changing the Roman government, the French commissaries expunged it from all the profane monuments ; but it still exists upon all the sacred edifices in which Pius VI. had the most remote concern. It was calculated in 1786, that this rage for availing himself of the slightest pretence for immortalising his name had already cost the treasury two hundred thousand crowns. It was this incurable vanity, rather than his piety or taste for the arts, which suggested to him the idea of constructing a sacristy by the side of St. Peter's church. He there displayed a magnificence which may dazzle at first sight ; but which cannot conceal its numerous defects from the eye of the connoisseur. Good taste may indeed apply to him the famous sentence pronounced by Apelles upon the Venus of a painter of his time : *you have made her fine, because you could not make her beautiful*. In like manner the sacristy of St. Peter's, which cost more than sixteen hundred thousand Roman crowns, is overloaded

with all the most gaudy decorations which architecture, sculpture, gilding, and painting, can afford; but it only appears so much the meaner when compared with the superb edifice by the side of which it stands. It is the design of *Carlo Marchionni*, an architect of inferior talents, and recalls to mind the defective school of *Borromini*; the style being altogether low and ignoble. Its dimensions are contrary to the rules of art; and it is full of nothing but breaks, niches, and projections. The columns and the altars are, in a manner, concealed in obscure corners; and the whole is surcharged with ornaments of the most tasteless kind.

In order to erect this monument to his glory, much rather than to that of the god whose vicar he called himself, it was necessary to pull down the temple of *Venus*, for which *Michael Angelo* had so much veneration, that he would have considered the mere idea of touching it as sacrilege.

It may be easily conceived that *Pius VI.* was not sparing of inscriptions in the sacristy of *St. Peter's*. Over the principal entrance were inscribed these words:

*Quod at templi Vaticani ornamentum publica vota flagitabant, Pius VI., pontifex maximus, fecit persequiturque anno, &c. \**

\* What the public voice demanded for the decoration of the church of the Vatican, *Pius VI.*, sovereign pontiff, began and completed in the year, &c.



How great must have been his mortification, when under this inscription he found the following insolent lines:

Publical mentiris. Non publica vota fuere,  
Sed tumidi ingenii vota fuere tui.

Thou liest! the public voice was not consulted; thou followedst the dictates of thy vanity alone.

That motive actuated him in all his enterprises: before his elevation to the pontificate he had possessed the abbey of Subiaco, at the distance of twenty miles from Rome. There also he displayed, in the most expensive manner, his taste for magnificence. An abbey in which he had resided, a church in which he had celebrated the holy mysteries, could not be suffered to remain in obscurity. He spent considerable sums in embellishing Subiaco; and this is not one of the smallest reproaches that may be brought against his prodigality.

A protector of the arts, more out of ostentation than taste, he connected his name with the famous museum, which constituted one of the most beautiful and most useful ornaments of the Vatican; and the kind of glory, thence resulting to his pontificate, is not altogether usurped. That glory had tempted him when he was as yet only treasurer of the Apostolical Chamber. The famous statue of Apollo Belvédère was, in a man-

ner, exiled, with several others, in one of the court-yards of the Vatican. Braschi suggested to Clement XIV. the idea of forming on that spot a collection of ancient monuments; and, as treasurer, presided over the first rudiments of this establishment. When seated upon the pontifical throne, he added body and consistence to his brilliant project. He built round the court-yard of the Apollo vast apartments, which he ornamented with statues, busts, terms, and *bas-reliefs*; and gave to the rich collection a title which associated his name with that of his predecessor. He called it the *Museum-Pium-Clementinum*. That museum gradually became one of the most valuable in Europe; Pius VI. neglecting nothing to enrich it. He claimed the right of pre-emption whenever any antique was discovered; and, by thus eluding the greedy interference of the antiquaries, procured monuments of art at the first hand, and at a moderate price. There it was that his vanity provided abundantly for its own gratification. Beneath each piece of sculpture which he had acquired, these words were engraved in letters of gold: *Munificentid Pii VI. P.M.* Most of these monuments of art stood in a bad light, and could not be seen to advantage without the assistance of a torch, the wavering gleams of which added to their beauty, by giving them life (if it may so be said); the only thing in

which some of them were defective. It was thus that connoisseurs went to admire the Gany-med, the Apollo Musagetes, the Torso, the Laocoon, and, above all, the famous Apollo Belvédère, which is alone worth a whole museum.

Engravings and explanations of the principal works of art, thus collected, began to be published in 1783, under the auspices of Pius VI. who was much flattered by the compliment. Lewis Myris undertook the task; and the learned Visconti, who, in the first moment of the revolution, was elevated to the consulate of Rome, added to the plates a luminous commentary, which at once proves his taste, his sagacity, and his erudition. They were both, it must be confessed, powerfully seconded by the pope. The first six volumes of this work, in *folio*, had already appeared in 1792; and the seventh was ready when the political commotions in Italy began. All lovers of antiquity must regret the suspension of this undertaking; which does double honour to the pontificate of Pius VI.

Wherever there was any thing more splendid than useful to be done, the zeal of that pontiff, and particularly his name, were sure to appear. Wishing to embellish the entrance of the Quirinal palace, where he resided during the summer season, he raised at great expense, in 1783, the obelisk which was lying upon the ground near



the *Scala Santa*, and placed it between those two equestrian statues, that have given to the eminence on which the palace stands the name of *Monte Cavallo*.

Though the erection of this obelisk was in itself a thing little meritorious, adulation made it serve as a pretence for lavishing upon the holy father, in pompous inscriptions, the most ridiculously bombastic praise. But the Roman people, who were suffering a privation of the most necessary articles of life, while the treasury was exhausting itself in embellishing their city, did not partake of the enthusiasm felt by the authors of those inscriptions. A wag, who preferred food to obelisks, gave on this occasion a lesson to his holiness, by applying to him a well-known passage of the gospel. He wrote these words at the bottom of the obelisk:

*Signore, di a questa pietra che divenga pane.*

"Lord, command that these stones be made bread."

Pius VI. took pattern from him, whose vicar he was, and abstained from the miracle. This rage for putting his name every where, and for suffering his *munificence* to be celebrated upon the most trifling occasions, exposed him to more than one sarcasm of a similar kind. It is well known that there was no other bread made at Rome but little round loaves, weighing a few

ounces, which were called *pagnotte*, and which cost two *baigochi*, or about two French sous a piece. The price never varied; but according as corn was more or less dear, the size of the *pagnotta* was diminished or increased. At a moment of scarcity, when the administrators of provisions had been obliged to make an extraordinary reduction in the weight of the *pagnotta*, one of those innocent mal-contents, who exhale all their gall in raillery, thought proper to put an exceedingly small *pagnotta* into the hand of Pasquin, and to write under the statue those pompous words, so often repeated in Rome:—  
MUNIFICENTIA PII SEPTIMI.

Bells had a double title to his predilection. They were connected with that worship, by the pomp of which he was so much flattered; and the greater their size, the farther off did they announce the holy personage by whose orders they were set in motion. Malignity reproached him, in this particular, with more than one grave puerility. There was, in St. Peter's church at Rome, a bell which only weighed 21,244 lb. He ordered it to be re-cast in the year 1783, with the addition of 400 quintals of metal. Three years afterwards he had another cast of 280 quintals, and christened it with great solemnity. Barbarous verses were afterwards engraved upon it, which attracted the admiration of the devout,

and offended men of taste. It was loaded with valuable pearls, and decorated with eight dolphins, a crown, and a thousand other ornaments; but the founder's art had failed him: the bell had no sound. The wags made themselves merry at the expense of the bell, the founder, and the godfather. They voted that this abortion should be deposited either in the *Museum-Pio-Clementinum*, or in the arsenal, after the example of the Abderitan sages, who were of an opinion somewhat similar in regard to a well, which was very skilfully constructed, and which wanted nothing but water.

In general Pius VI. was not fortunate in the enterprises suggested by his vanity. The sovereigns of Rome, from the time of the emperors down to the present day, have prided themselves upon enlarging, fortifying, and embellishing the port of Ancona. The ruins of the beautiful monument, erected there by the senate in honour of Trajan, still attests the beneficence of that emperor. In modern times Clement XII. is the pope who has paid the most attention to the embellishment of that port. A triumphal arch erected in honour of him, opposite to that of Trajan, and his statue in marble, are testimonies of the gratitude of its inhabitants. Pius VI. wished also to give a lustre to his pontificate, by making some addition to the works of his pre-



deceffors. The port of Ancona is indebted to him for feveral improvements; among others, for a light-houfe: but he was ftill more anxious to have his ftatue erected there than to deferve it. In 1789, while the workmen were employed on it, part of the fcaffolding gave way, and killed a great number of them. This accident, joined to fo many others, was confidered as a bad omen; and in fact Pius VI. was now approaching the era of his greateft misfortunes.

But it was in the performance of his pontifical functions, above all, that his tafte for oftentation was difplayed; and that his vanity found frequent opportunities of gratification. It muft be confefled, that, on thofe occafions, he was as much favoured by nature as by the pompous ceremonies of the Roman catholic church. He was in all refpects one of the handsomeft men of his time. To a very lofty ftature he joined a noble and expreffive fet of features, and a florid complexion, which the hand of time itfelf feemed to fpare. He contrived to wear his pontifical habits in fuch a way, that they deprived him of none of his personal advantages. In every thing he did he difplayed them with a refinement of coquetry which gave great fcope to ridicule. When elevated to the papacy, he had, in conformity with a custom that had grown into a law, laid afide the peruke, which he wore

while cardinal. His forehead was entirely bald; but there remained behind, and on each side of his head, a ring of hair of the most brilliant white, which gave him a look at once noble and venerable. He had also one of the handsomest legs in Italy; and was not a little vain of it. Not wishing that his long pontifical robes should entirely conceal that part of his person, to the adorning of which he was always scrupulously attentive, he took great care to hold them up on one side, so that one of his legs was entirely exposed to view. This affected display of his hair and legs, so unworthy of a grave pontiff, gave occasion to the following distich, which, though bad enough in itself, serves, however, as a proof that no opportunity was lost of turning him into ridicule:

*Aspice, Roma, Pium. Pius t. haud est : aspice minum—  
Luxuriante comâ, luxuriante pede.*

"Rome, look at Pius. He Pius! no indeed:

"He is a comedian. Behold the display of his hair;

"And see how vain he is of his leg."

Nothing, indeed, was more striking than to see him, on days of great parade, crowned with the triple diadem, arrayed in robes of the most dazzling white, which contrasted with the splendor of the Roman purple, soaring in a manner over a crowd of ecclesiastics of every rank, and seeming thereby to announce his sway over the universal church. On these solemn occasions

all the members of the clergy came and adored him repeatedly; and each class in a different way. The cardinals were not permitted to kiss his hand till they had bowed down before his throne. The prelates and heads of orders bowed still more humbly, and only rose as high as his knees; while the inferior clergy remained at his feet. The allegory of the statuary, prostrate before the work of his own hands, was never better applied, than to this stupid veneration, particularly of the cardinals for the sovereign pontiff—the creature of their intrigues and of their caprices; in which not one of them, perhaps, seriously thought that he saw the work of the Holy Ghost.

It is needless to say with what an eye of pity philosophy looks down upon this humiliating homage, paid by a multitude of reasonable beings to one of their fellow-creatures. Many spectators, however,—many even of those who were the most strongly guarded against all these vain illusions, could not help feeling a strong emotion at the sight of the pomp that surrounded St. Peter's chair, especially while it was occupied by Pius VI. The greatest magnificence accompanied him whenever he went out. A carriage, at the back of which he was seated alone in an arm chair richly ornamented, moved



forward, escorted by servants on horseback, and in long clothes, driven by a coachman and postillions, with their heads uncovered, rolling along majestically flow between two rows of foot soldiers, and followed by detachments of light horse and cuirassiers. It was impossible for any thing to be more striking.

But when he officiated in the grand ceremonies of the church, it was difficult even for heretics, for free-thinkers even, to avoid feeling a sort of religious enthusiasm. An Englishman (John Moore), after having described one of these sights, whither he had carried nothing but a very profane spirit of curiosity; but where he had admired the dignity and grace with which Pius VI. performed his part, cannot help adding:

“ No ceremony can be better calculated for  
 “ striking the senses, and imposing on the un-  
 “ derstanding, than this of the supreme pontiff  
 “ giving the blessing from the balcony of St.  
 “ Peter’s. For my own part, if I had not, in my  
 “ early youth, received impressions highly unfavourable to the chief actor in this magnificent  
 “ interlude, I should have been in danger of  
 “ paying him a degree of respect very inconsistent with the religion in which I was edu-  
 “ cated.” Let us hear the description given of one of these ceremonies by another eye-witness,

whose testimony certainly is not suspicious. It is that of a protestant, and of a protestant philosopher.

“ The solemnities of the day of the Ascension  
 “ consist in the solemn adoration of the pope by  
 “ the Sacred College, and in the public benediction he bestows. It is on this occasion that  
 “ Pius VI. displays all the graces of his person;  
 “ that he renders almost supportable the disgusting ceremony of kissing his hands and feet;  
 “ and that he distributes benedictions with unparalleled dignity. With his body leaning a  
 “ little forward, as if desirous of raising up the  
 “ person who is about to kneel down before  
 “ him, he presents to the cardinal, who is approaching, his hand to kiss; and while a prelate, standing by his side, gently lifts up his  
 “ robe, and discovers an elegantly shaped leg,  
 “ he holds out his foot ready to receive its share  
 “ of the homage.

“ The cardinal, on his knees, kisses the foot  
 “ of the pontiff, who gives him his benediction,  
 “ and while he is rising, the kiss of peace upon  
 “ the forehead.—When the ceremony was over,  
 “ Pius VI., arrayed in his pontifical habits,  
 “ seated himself in the arm-chair prepared for  
 “ him, and was carried with great pomp to the  
 “ *loggia*, a kind of tribune over the entrance of  
 “ St. Peter's church. At the moment when the

“ inner curtain of that tribune was drawn back,  
 “ the seat on which the pope was sitting was  
 “ brought forward to the ballustrade, a salute of  
 “ artillery was heard from the castle of St. An-  
 “ gelo, and all the bells in Rome were set a  
 “ ringing together. At the same instant the  
 “ square before the church, in which the pope’s  
 “ guards were drawn up, resounded with mar-  
 “ tial music; while the acclamations of a pro-  
 “ digious number of spectators, intoxicated with  
 “ enthusiasm, confounded themselves with the  
 “ rattling of the kettle drums and the shrill tones  
 “ of the trumpets. A perfect calm succeeded  
 “ this universal commotion, this stunning mix-  
 “ ture of shouts and musical sounds. The pope  
 “ then rose from his seat, and instantly the whole  
 “ of the immense crowd fell on their knees be-  
 “ fore him. He lifted up his eyes, extended his  
 “ arms towards heaven, drew them slowly back  
 “ across his breast, spread them again as if to  
 “ pour down upon Rome and the universe the  
 “ blessings he had just obtained from heaven,  
 “ and disappeared from the tribune.”

Let us also listen to the description that the  
 same observer has given of the no less striking  
 part which the pope played in the procession of  
 Corpus Christi. It will besides furnish us *en*  
*passant* with a few traits of the disposition of that  
 nation, which we imagined to be ripe for liberty.



"After that crowd of religious corporations, of which the population of Rome was principally composed, had been seen to file off for two whole hours in the greatest order, all on a sudden the ear was struck by the ringing of bells, and by the report of the cannon of the castle of St. Angelo. This was to announce the appearance of the sovereign pontiff; who was brought in state out of the great door of St. Peter's church. It is equally impossible for the pen to describe the truly picturesque beauty of this group, and the profound impression it made upon the most indifferent spectators. Sitting upon a kind of litter, covered with cloth of gold, the venerable old man, whose fine figure age had respected, was borne aloft upon the shoulders of his guards; and thus moved on under a magnificent canopy, supported by the most distinguished personages of his court. The steps of the bearers were slow, and so measured, that the pontiff seemed to hover in the air over the heads of all around him. He was afterwards seen to lean forward, in order to reach the altar on which the consecrated wafer was exposed in an *ostensor*\* enriched with diamonds. Although the pope was really fitting, yet, as in that position, he was en-

\* The box in which the Roman catholic priests expose the host to the view of the public.

tirely surrounded by an immense robe of white  
 sattin, embroidered with crowns of gold, which  
 hung down in waving folds as low as the shoul-  
 ders of his bearers, and entirely covered his feet,  
 and the altar itself, he seemed to be on his knees  
 before the holy sacrament. Of all his person no-  
 thing was visible, but his hands joined together  
 and laid upon the altar, and his bare head  
 adorned with his white hair. In that attitude,  
 he prayed in a low voice, while his eyes, lifted  
 up towards heaven, were moistened with the  
 tears of compunction; and every feature ex-  
 pressed the most fervent devotion. Is it astonish-  
 ing, that a scene so well contrived, and disposed  
 with so much art in every particular, should  
 produce upon the multitude the expected effect?  
 It was so general, and so strongly marked, that  
 it was impossible to avoid being deeply affected.  
 From the very moment, when the discharge of  
 artillery and the ringing of bells first announced  
 the approach of the pope, and when the pyra-  
 midal group was seen coming forward, and  
 passing through the gates of the church, the  
 people had fallen prostrate upon the ground, as  
 if struck by lightning; then, beating their bo-  
 soms, had lifted up their eyes full of respect and  
 religious awe towards the pope, who was ap-  
 proaching the holy sacrament; and, as if a divi-  
 nity had appeared to them, followed him with

looks of admiration, until he had entirely vanished from their sight. Several princes, and the pope's generals, clad in cuirasses of polished steel, walked in his retinue. A great number of his life-guards, the Swiss in his pay, and his guards, both horse and foot, composed the solemn procession, which took up near five hours in passing through the colonnades; and three of the neighbouring streets. The pope afterwards ascended the principal altar of St. Peter's church, and gave his apostolical benediction to the people who crowded round him: that same people, so pious and devout, then retired to pass the rest of the day in the most licentious orgies, which frequently ended in stabbing and assassination. So slight is the impression really made upon them, though apparently so strong! The art of the priests has invented this magic picture, in order to keep the people for some hours in a state of religious stupefaction; but what have they done for their improvement? Their end is to dazzle and to subjugate them; but not to reform their manners."

To the reflections of the philosopher, we will only add, that the Roman nation, so devout and so depraved, continued, till the overthrow of the papal throne, to pay to him who occupied it, this idolatrous homage, the evident mark of their servile attachment; but at the same time, while



they adored the pontiff, they often cursed the sovereign. Pius VI. like him whose vicar he called himself, was endowed with a two-fold nature. Clad in his pontifical habits, surrounded by the pomp of religious ceremonies, and employed in the distribution of celestial treasures, Pius VI. appeared to the Romans to be a god. On his return to the Vatican, he was no more in their eyes, particularly during the last years of his pontificate, than a man exposed to their murmurs, and to their sarcasms. This double sovereignty was so far singular, that the sceptre considered itself as inviolable under shelter of the tiara; that the devotion of the subjects seemed to insure their obedience; and that the benedictions, the indulgences, and all the celestial favours, of which the monarchical demi-god had undertaken to be the distributor, had at once for object and result to sanctify, to overawe, and to disarm them. Accordingly nothing less than the violent hurricane of the French revolution was necessary to tear up by the roots that gigantic tree,

*De qui la tête au ciel étoit voisine,*

*Et dont les pieds touchoient à l'empire des morts\*.*

It remains to be observed, that all these pomp-

\* Of which the head approached the skies, and the feet reached down to the mansions of the dead.

ous mummeries, of which we have just given a few specimens, had long been an appendage of the pontifical throne; but no pope had combined, in the same degree as Pius VI., every thing necessary to insure their effect. His predecessor, much more meritorious than he in a variety of respects, was humane, affable, and generous. He possessed all the domestic virtues; but he retained under the tiara all the modesty of his former situation in life; and felt a sort of philosophical disdain for ostentation. The principal persons about him, sensible how much the parade of ceremonies added to the temporal power of the Roman catholic church and increased the illusion of which it stands so much in need, were vexed at Ganganelli's neglecting, with a sort of affectation, that external dignity which imposes so much upon the vulgar. The sacred charm was about to vanish. The pontiff seemed desirous of distinguishing himself only by his simplicity. Braschi, on the contrary, possessed in his manners, in his taste, and in his exterior, every thing that was capable of impressing mankind with respect. The striking contrast that existed, in that particular, between him and his predecessor, gave rise to a belief that the cardinals, in electing Pius VI. had been actuated above all by the hope that the chair of St. Peter, debased by Ganganelli, would rise again, and

shine with renovated splendour. An English traveller observed, that in this they imitated the Roman senate, which sometimes chose a dictator in order to restore the ancient discipline.

The hope of the cardinals was not deceived, at least in that respect. No pope ever displayed more pomp than Pius VI. in the performance of his functions; nor was the prevailing taste of any of his predecessors ever more favoured by circumstances. The rage for visiting Italy was become general; and had reached every country and every rank. Pius VI. had the good fortune, so dear to his vanity, of reviewing a whole crowd of great personages, including most of the princes of Europe, of receiving their homage, and of doing the honours of his court and church in the presence of the most illustrious visitors.

The epoch at which he was elected procured him, during the very first year of his pontificate, one of those occasions of unfrequent occurrence, on which the Romish church displays the greatest pomp, and is most lavish of spiritual treasures; we mean the jubilee, which was a real *bonne fortune* to Pius VI. It will soon be forgotten in France; but, perhaps, it is yet remembered, that there were jubilees of two kinds; the one which recurred periodically was properly called the *Holy Year*; the other was the *Jubilee of Exaltation*, and was celebrated at the accession



of a new pope to the pontifical throne. The first, as being the most uncommon, was beyond comparison the most solemn.

It was first established in 1300 by Boniface VIII. who, wishing to sanctify the profane institution of the secular games of ancient Rome, conceived the idea of indicating the first year of each century as that in which heaven, more particularly propitious, would in future shower down upon the faithful a larger portion of those blessings, of which the popes called themselves the dispensers. Clement VI. was of opinion, that these periods, so favourable to the faithful, and so glorious to the Holy See, were too distant; and ordered that they should recur every fifty years. The second jubilee was therefore celebrated in 1350. Sextus V. improved still farther upon the liberality of his predecessors; and ordained that the jubilee should take place every five and twenty years, which has been the practice ever since.

Clement XIV. already attacked by the lingering disease of which he died, had in the month of April, as we have already said, announced the opening of the holy year, in full consistory. It was reserved for another to celebrate it. Pius VI. had *that happiness* in the following year; and, but for the catastrophe which precipitated him

from his throne, would probably have enjoyed it a second time.

The jubilee of 1775, in all probability the last, was celebrated with a degree of magnificence, surpassing that of all the preceding ones. It was on this occasion, that Pius VI. gave the first proof of his taste for pompous ceremonies. One of the principal circumstances of the festival, that indeed which may be called the first act of it, is the opening of the famous *porta santa*, or sacred door. This door, which is one of those of St. Peter's church, remained constantly shut except during the holy year. It was then opened with a parade of which Pius VI. took care not to diminish the effect. It was his office to preside over the demolition of a brick wall, that closed the entrance of the sacred door. Advancing with majestic gravity, he struck the first stroke, and instantly the wall fell to the ground under the redoubled blows of the workmen, to whom the signal had been given. The pious spectators eagerly seized upon the materials; each stone being an object of high veneration. By their contact with that which was laid four-and-twenty years before by the sacred hands of the sovereign pontiff, they had acquired the virtue of curing all sorts of diseases. According to custom, the *porta santa*

remained open during all the holy year, and was the scene of the most ridiculous mummary. The pope himself did not pass through it without exhibiting marks of the most profound respect; while the pilgrims, disdaining the numerous passages which lead into the church of St. Peter, entered it only by crawling under the sacred door upon their hands and knees. It was shut with great solemnity at the end of the year. The pope approached, sitting upon a kind of throne, and surrounded by the cardinals; and an anthem was sung, accompanied by loud music: it was the lyre of Amphion about to rebuild the walls of Thebes. The pontiff then descended with a gold trowel in his hand; laid the first stone of the wall which was to last twenty-five years; put a little mortar upon it; and reascended his throne. Real masons took his place, and completed the blocking up of the sacred door, the ceremony closing with a solemn mass. Thus did the Roman catholics lavish the august mysteries of their religion, sometimes upon the baptism of a bell, and sometimes upon the rebuilding of a wall.

The following day the festival was continued, Pius VI: displaying in it all his great talents for acting, which were hitherto but little known. He was already near sixty years of age; but his complexion still retained somewhat of the bril-



liant colouring of youth. The Romans, accustomed to see their pontiffs bending under the weight of years, and labouring in the performance of their public functions, which were often long and fatiguing, admired the address and grace with which the new pope acquitted himself of his task. The church seemed to grow young again, and to have a right, as well as Pius VI., to expect prosperous days.

It was shortly afterwards that the beauty of his person received an homage, to which the vicars of Jesus Christ were not accustomed. While Pius VI. was passing through a street of Rome, carried along with a splendour suitable to his dignity, a voice was heard from one of the windows, which were crowded with curious spectators. It was that of a young woman: *quanto è bello! quanto è bello!* cried she, in a moment of enthusiasm. An old woman, in haste to correct any thing that might appear too profane in this exclamation, replied, with her hands joined, and her eyes lifted up towards heaven, *Tanto è bello quanto è santo!* It is said, that such a compliment gave Pius VI. more secret satisfaction than all the incense lavished upon him by the prelates at the altar, and all the genuflexions of the Sacred College.

We do not mean, however, that an inclination, common to many of the cardinals, was ever

included in the charges brought against him during the course of his long pontificate. His very enemies, if not altogether unjust, must confess that he has always been irreproachable as to purity of morals. In the early days which he passed at Rome, ambition made him seek the society of a lady of high rank, and of a very intriguing disposition, who was supposed to possess considerable influence. This was madame Falconieri, mother of the young lady, afterwards duchess of Braschi. He was indebted to her for his first success in his ecclesiastical career. But madame Falconieri, though worthy of attention as a patroness, had nothing that could make her desirable as a mistress. Braschi visited her for a short time; kept away as soon as he had obtained the only favour he expected from her; and was solely indebted for the reputation, which he acquired in these latter times, of being mademoiselle Falconieri's father, to the ill-humour of his subjects, and to his blind partiality for her after she became his niece.

During the time that he was treasurer of the Apostolical Chamber, that is to say, from 1766 to 1773, he was remarkable for his constant application to business, for his contempt of worldly pleasures, and for the regularity of his conduct; which procured him general esteem. He did not forfeit this character during his cardinalate,

which lasted only two years; and when he was seated in St. Peter's chair, excepting indeed the duplicity of which he was suspected, and which the embarrassment of circumstances seemed to render excusable, he was free from all serious reproach. Since his elevation to the papacy, his defects, which he had either concealed, or had had no opportunity of developing, have excited a great deal of hatred; but calumny, which has not spared him, has scarcely ever attacked him upon the score of his morals. Gorani is, perhaps, the only one who treats him as ill in that respect as in every other. He throws suspicions upon the motives of the affection which cardinal Ruffo manifested for him in his youth; he pretends that it was not ambition alone which led to his connexion with madame Falconieri; and he even insinuates, that gallantry was one of the principal means of his elevation to the papal throne. It is in fact of no great consequence whether these charges be founded or not. The salvation of Pius VI. may be much concerned; but his glory is very little interested in his having faithfully practised one of the first Christian virtues. It is a duty, however, that we owe to truth, to affirm, that those who have known him long, and well, never perceived any thing that could give rise to the smallest doubt as to the purity of his morals, at least from the time in



which he was appointed treasurer, to the end of his pontificate. If the amorous connexions of a temporal sovereign cannot escape the vigilance of his numerous attendants, how can a pope, all whose steps and moments are counted, conceal himself from the nice observation of the conscientious, or from the keen eye of malignity; and cover his secret intrigues with an impenetrable veil? Pius VI. divided all his time between his religious duties, his closet, and the library of the Vatican. He went out very seldom, and never without company. He had no taste for a country residence, nor even for those innocent amusements which the gravest men allow themselves as a relaxation after their labours. He passed the summer season at the Quirinal palace, and the rest of the year at the Vatican. His only recreation was the visit which he paid almost every year to the Pontine marshes. Constantly taken up with serious occupations, or the duties of his office, he avoided, instead of seeking, the society of women.

As pope, he could not then lead a more exemplary life; but as a man, and as a sovereign, he no doubt exposed himself to many and serious reproaches. An erroneous opinion had been formed of him in many respects. When rendered more conspicuous by his eminent station, he soon discovered a great ignorance of worldly

affairs, particularly of politics; an obstinacy which never yielded to a direct attack; and an invincible attachment to certain prejudices, inseparable perhaps from his profession, but of which he neither suspected the inconvenience nor the danger. This we shall have frequent opportunities of observing in the course of these Memoirs. He entertained the most favourable idea of his own capacity. Rather headstrong than firm, he was constantly undoing what he had done; and this mixture of vanity and weakness was attended with two serious inconveniences. What was no more than inconsistency, and want of resolution, was taken for duplicity. Coldly affable he never felt a real affection for any one; nor ever knew what it was completely to unbosom himself, unless when fear rendered him communicative.

Out of the five cardinals, who were successively his secretaries of state, there was not one who could flatter himself with having enjoyed his entire confidence. He granted it, but still under certain restrictions, to Gerdyl and Antonelli, two other cardinals; consulting them solely about matters in which he thought he could derive advantage from their talents.

Hasty, impetuous, and sometimes even passionate, he required to be curbed by fear, or soothed by affectionate language, which indi-

cated an attachment to his interest, without hurting his pride. Cardinal de Bernis said of him, towards the end of the year 1777, *I watch over him incessantly, as over a child of an excellent disposition; but too full of spirits, and capable of throwing itself out of the window if left a moment alone.*

*That excellent disposition* was afterwards in great measure spoiled by adulation, the possession of power, and the want of somebody bold enough to tell him the truth, or inclined to take the trouble. Faults gradually manifested themselves that the most clear-sighted had not even suspected. His long pontificate was, besides, a grievance which neither the cardinals nor the people of Rome could pardon him. In short, a concurrence of unlucky circumstances, to which he knew not how to accommodate himself, added to his improvidence and to his vanity, the principal source of his prodigality, and of his taste for brilliant, but expensive enterprises, rendered him in the end more odious than many princes who have been really wicked. One of his operations alone will find favour with posterity, and even immortalise his name, although infected with that principal fault which manifested itself in every thing, and which was not one of the smallest causes of his sorrows: this is the draining, which he at least began, of the Pontine marshes.



## CHAPTER VII.

*The draining of the Pontine Marshes.*

OF all the enterprises of Pius VI., that to which he constantly attached the highest importance, and which will throw a lustre upon his pontificate, even in the eyes of the severest judges, is the draining of the Pontine marshes. It alternately procured his vanity gratifications and disappointments; and was the theme of pompous panegyrics and bitter sarcasms. It is connected with the prosperity and salubrity of Italy. The expenses attendant on it occasioned the exhaustion of the papal treasury, and the murmurs of the Roman people; and thus paved the way for a revolution. It therefore deserves some mention\*.

The Appian way, *Via Appia*, famous in history on account of the era of its construction, and the name of its founder, and rendered still more illustrious by so many triumphal proces-

\* We have borrowed the greatest part of these details from a work upon Italy, published in German, by Doctor Meyer, a Hamburgher, equally respectable for his talents and virtues. This work appeared at Berlin in 1792, under the title of *Darstellungen aus Italien*.

sions; that road, of which the ruins, surviving the ravages of time, would alone suffice to give an idea of the Romans and of their public works, passed through the country which has since been called the Pontine marshes. The origin of their existence is lost in oblivion. Two rivers, the *Amasenus* and the *Ufens*, which have preserved their ancient names to the present day, appear to have been, by their overflowing, the first cause of the desolation to which this country has been condemned, whenever the carelessness of the government has ceased to call the guardian hand of industry to its assistance. From that part of the Apennines which borders upon the ancient Campania, and at the foot of which is a large valley extending to the sea, run a great number of streams, large and small, that find inexhaustible sources in the summits and sides of that chain of mountains. Their union forms several rivers, the beds of which being constantly filled up by the mud that the water brings down with it, cannot contain the abundant tribute they receive, especially in the rainy season. They then swell, overflow, and cover the plain, which is on a level with their banks. Some of these torrents run off into the lowest parts of the valley, and there form immense ponds, abounding with fish.

Such is the permanent cause of the tendency

of this country to degenerate into a morass: such are the obstacles which the Romans, during the splendid period of the republic, had constantly to overcome, and over which they constantly triumphed.

A colony of Spartans, disgusted with the severity of the laws of Lycurgus, quitted Lacedæmon, and, after a long and dangerous navigation, landed upon this coast. Finding it a fertile country, they settled there; and, according to the custom of those superstitious times, dedicated a temple, a sacred wood, and several fountains, to an unknown goddess, whom they were pleased to call *Feronia*; and whose worship and altars have been immortalised in the verses of Horace\*.

By the care of this industrious colony, the country which they had peaceably conquered was rapidly peopled, and attained a high degree of cultivation. It is the country of the Volsci, who made so great a figure during the robust infancy of the Roman republic; and it was for a long time one of its principal granaries. But towards the time when Rome was in its greatest splendour, this district, desolated by inundations, was indiscriminately denominated the Pontine country, and the Pontine marshes (*ager Pontinus*,

\* Ora manusque tuâ lavimus, FERONIA, lymphâ.

Lib. I. Sat. V.



*palus Pontinus*); the three and twenty cities, which formerly embellished its surface, no longer existing but in the remembrance of the Romans. The principal families of Rome, however, established in such cantons, as the elevation of the ground, and the efforts of industry, preserved from the ravages of the stagnant water, those country-seats, the beauty and fertility of which were celebrated by the Roman poets.

About three centuries before the Christian era, Appius Claudius, the censor, surnamed the Blind, stood forward as the first restorer of this country. He carried across the morasses the road which bears his name, and of which the magnificence was never equalled. Among other monuments, it offered to the eye those tombs which suggested to the mind of the pensive traveller this philosophical thought: *Those who repose here once lived, and, like thee, were mortal*.

It was not, however, till a century and a half after the making of the Appian way, that Cornelius Cethegus, the consul, undertook to drain the Pontine marshes. Transient and impotent efforts! Julius Cæsar found this country a prey to new desolation. Covetous of every kind of glory, he was about to restore it to fertility; when a premature death prevented him from executing the arduous task.

Augustus undertook it. It was he who cut,

along the Appian way, a canal which was destined to receive the stagnant water, and to afford it an outlet; and which served also for the purposes of navigation, and for the conveyance of travellers\*. This was the canal on which Horace embarked with Mæcenâs, on his way from Rome to Brundisium; and of which he seasons his description with the salt of his satirical humour.

Trajan appeared next in the list of the improvers of this fatal country; but he confined himself to the reparation and embellishment of the Appian way, and to the making of another road which bears his name†.

Near three centuries afterwards, during the memorable reign of Theodoric I., king of the Goths in Italy, the Pontine marshes re-appeared in all their horror. Let us listen to that prince himself, while describing them to the Roman senate, through the medium of the illustrious Cassiodorus, his minister, in the poetical style of those barbarous times.—“Those morasses,” says he, “of which the inimical fury lays waste the neighbouring country; over which the irresistible violence of the water extends itself like a sea; and, invading the country far and near,

\* See the map annexed to this volume.

† See the map.

“ desolates with its dreadful inundations the  
 “ most delightful plains; deforms their beauty-  
 “ ous face by converting them into deserts; and  
 “ disgraces a soil, which, being stripped of its  
 “ fruits by the floods, no longer affords any use-  
 “ ful production, since it is left a prey to the  
 “ ravages of the stagnant water. Let us ad-  
 “ mire,” adds he, “ the enterprising boldness  
 “ of past times revived in one of our contempo-  
 “ raries, who has just attempted alone what the  
 “ united powers of the state did not dare to un-  
 “ dertake.” He meant a rich patrician of the  
 name of *Decius*, who was in fact invested with  
 the sole charge of draining these marshes; and to  
 whom Theodoric abandoned the property of the  
 plains he was about to render fertile, “ because,”  
 said he, “ it is just that every one should enjoy  
 “ the fruit of his labours.” An inscription  
 found near Terracina proves that the efforts of  
 Decius were crowned with some success.

But after him, time, powerfully seconded by  
 the ravages of war, and by the neglect of the  
 ruling powers, resumed its rights over a country,  
 devoted by turns to the charms of a luxuriant  
 cultivation, and to the devastation occasioned by  
 the merciless floods. The popes, who first  
 established their temporal authority in the Ro-  
 man state, had neither sufficient activity, know-  
 ledge, nor treasure; three things of which the



union alone can give birth to the miracles of industry. Several sovereign pontiffs, however, endeavoured to signalise their reign by bold attempts. Boniface VIII., Martin V., Leo X., and particularly Sextus V., whose energetic character reminds us, in many respects, of the splendid days of Rome, were ambitious of this kind of glory, and not without success. The traces of two canals are still to be seen, which might have been restored at a small expense to their ancient destination; and of which the names (*Rio Martino* and *Fiume Sisto*) denote the pontiffs by whom they were cut.

Their indolent successors suffered these noble works to go to ruin. From time to time some of them were tempted to resume them; but of what use are transient whims in enterprizes which require a strong and constant volition? Projects were formed; maps were drawn; and the advice was taken of Dutch engineers, as the most skilful in Europe in works of the kind. In these latter times, some Italians also presented plans for draining land, which were slightly investigated, and then laid upon the shelf. In the mean time the cause of the ravages kept operating slowly, but without interruption; and when Pius VI. succeeded to the papal throne, the Pontine marshes, after two centuries of neglect, were in the most horrible state. To re-

store to cultivation and salubrity the vast extent of ground which they covered, was an enterprize that might have dismayed a man of common intrepidity; but his courage was supported by the idea of the glory about to be attached to his name; or rather it was nothing but that same love of extraordinary things, in which the little good he has done, and all the errors he is expiating, originated. Immediately after his accession, he went to visit that desolate country. He shuddered, when, from the top of a hill which commands a view of it, he saw at his feet the deep ravages of time, and of the inundations, the pestiferous fogs, which extended far and wide, and the dangers which even threatened his sacred person, should he dare to tread the unsolid ground. He conceived from that moment the project of beginning by making a safe road, and building great bridges over the abyss, in order to secure to himself the means of crossing it at least without danger. He next turned his attention to the great operation of draining. It is at the port of Aftura, where Cicero was decapitated, and where the unfortunate Conradin fell, thirteen centuries after, into the hands of his cruel conqueror, that these marshes begin. They extend along the coast as far as Terracina, upon the confines of the kingdom of Naples; and in some places advance a great way into the

interior of the country. They would long ago have poisoned the air of Rome, if the pestilential vapours they exhale had not been stopped by the forests which shelter the cities of Cisterna and Serranetia.

At the beginning of a reign, the attention of every one is awake, and every hope is alive; a prospect opens which admits the indulgence of distant speculations; and vanity, ambition, and adulation, are eager to second the views of the sovereign. Those of Pius VI. were forwarded by his new subjects. He established a bank, under the name of *Monte dei Marecchi*, to receive the funds destined for this enterprise; and in a little time the voluntary subscriptions carried thither amounted to 120,000 Roman crowns. Bolognini, one of those whose plans had been presented under the pontificate of Clement XIII., was immediately put at the head of the undertaking; and in 1777, Sani, an able surveyor, was charged to draw a plan of the ground, and to indicate the spots, in which the works might be begun with the greatest probability of success.

The first thing discovered under the mud was an ancient aqueduct, which formerly supplied the city of Terracina with water; and which was repaired at little expense. The famous Appian way was next cleared of the strata of



earth under which it lay buried; and that master-piece of Roman magnificence, paved entirely with blocks of lava, and leading across the whole country, which separates Rome from Capua, was restored to the light of day, and to the traveller; but not without considerable pains and expense. Appius Claudius, better versed in hydraulics than his successors, was sensible that a road carried through the midst of stagnant water ought not much to exceed their ordinary level. No doubt, at the time of great inundations, the Appian way, thus constructed, was momentarily overflowed; but its small degree of elevation served at least to favour the running off of the water towards the sea. Those who came after him remedied an inconvenience which lasted only a few hours, and, by heightening the surface of the road, rendered it more constantly passable; but they created a much more serious inconvenience. The road thus raised five or six feet by Trajan, and several feet more by king Theodoric, four centuries afterwards, was intersected at certain intervals by arches, under which the water that came from the Apennines found a passage to the sea. Those arches being choked up, from want of proper care, the water, which at the time of the inundations used to pass so freely over the old road, found itself confined by the kind of dyke that improvidence had

raised; remained stagnant; diffused itself; and rose to a higher level; and thus the mischief, meant to be remedied, only grew worse and worse. It was at its height when Pius VI. undertook to attack it at its source. The successive *strata* of stones, which had been laid upon the work of the ancient Romans, were first demolished by dint of labour; the dates of their construction, and the names of their authors, appearing by inscriptions, which both time and the water had spared. At length the old Appian way was discovered. It was found to be still furrowed with deep ruts, made by the carriages of the Romans in the time of the republic, and perhaps also by their triumphal cars; sacred traces, which awakened the most sublime recollections. It was on this revered foundation that Pius VI. made the new road, which was carried as far as Terracina, the last town of his dominions towards the south, and which the court of Naples continued to the celebrated city of Capua. In 1786 this noble road was completely finished, was open for passengers, and constituted one of the principal embellishments of modern Italy.

While this magnificent work was in hand, orders were given to cut through the morass a wide canal, which was to terminate in the lake of Fogliano; a lake separated from the coast by

a narrow tongue of land. Thousands of hands were employed in these labours, and not without success. As early as the month of October 1778, a piece of land, of eighty *rubbie*, was recovered from the stagnant water; and in the following year was fit for cultivation.

The first enthusiasm of the Romans, however, had subsided, and began in that very year to give place to murmurs. The voluntary subscriptions falling far short of the expense, the undertaking could not be carried on without burdensome loans; and did not appear to be attended with the success answerable to such ruinous efforts. It was decryed. The ill-humour that the pope thence conceived served only to confirm him in his projects; and sometimes gave occasion to scenes characteristic of his irascible, but just and benevolent disposition. In the course of the above year a priest of Terracina, a good ecclesiastic, but a bad courtier, repaired to Rome to solicit a prebend. He had just passed through a country which occupied the pontiff's attention, and could give him certain and recent information on the subject. In answer to the questions of his holiness, he bluntly told him that the draining made no progress, and that the sums expended upon it were so much *money thrown away*. "*Money thrown away!*" replied the pope, in a rage. "You are an insolent fellow: what do you



come to brave me in my very palace?" This was a clap of thunder to the poor priest. He fainted away; was carried to his apartments; and, when he recovered his senses, thought that he had nothing better to do than to return with all speed to Terracina. His despair was great: instead of his prebend, he had nothing to carry back but the malediction of the holy father. But what was his astonishment, when on a sudden he saw the pope's chamberlain enter, and deliver to him not only the grant of the prebend, but also an order to wait upon his holiness without delay. This second interview was less stormy than the former; and was no doubt more useful to the pope. He derived information from it by which he profited.

But what can human perseverance effect, when opposed by the caprices of the elements? Towards the end of 1779, a dreadful inundation destroyed all the works; swallowed up the enormous sums they had already cost; and justified the unfavourable prediction of the priest of Terracina. Nobody knew how to communicate to the pope this fatal intelligence. It reached him disguised, and weakened; but it was still sufficiently alarming to inspire him with a desire of repairing to the spot in order to estimate the mischief, and to prescribe a remedy.

It was a thing extremely uncommon to see a

pope absent himself from his see. From Benedict XIII., who, in 1727, went as far as Benevento, no pontiff had been known to make a longer excursion than to Castel-Gondolfo, which is only at a few miles distance from Rome. Pius VI. was scarcely recovered from a very ferious fit of illness. His physicians, his darling nephew, count Onesti, and his courtiers particularly, endeavoured to dissuade him from the execution of his project : but he persisted in it, and set off, on the 5th of April 1780, with a very small retinue. This proof of his taste for simplicity, and of his aversion for useless luxury, instead of procuring him the praise he was entitled to, served only to render him the object of sarcasms. His economy was construed into meanness ; his abstinence from pomp into a want of dignity. The sovereign pontiff, the vicar of Jesus Christ, was, as one of our modern poets say, *condemned to magnificence*. What unaccountable injustice ! We first deify men, and then impute it to them as a crime, if, when surrounded with pageantry and adulation, they consider themselves as demi-gods at least. But let us follow Pius VI. in his journey.

He would not allow the cardinal de Bernis to accompany him, even to his bishopric of Albano, ten miles distant from Rome. His obsequious eminence obeyed ; but as he had already disco-

vered the taste which the pope endeavoured to conceal under the veil of modesty, Pius VI. found, on his arrival at Albano, inscriptions with which he permitted his vanity to be flattered. At Veletri, where he slept the first night, cardinal Albani, dean of the Sacred College, besides the incense of inscriptions, lavished on him another kind of homage, to which he was far from being insensible. It consisted of some effects of great value, that had just descended to him by inheritance. On leaving Veletri, he was accompanied by a squadron of cuirassiers as far as Terracina, where he was to stop. The neighbouring towns sent detachments of soldiers, to prevent the disorders that might have been occasioned by an immense crowd of people, attracted by curiosity from all parts of the ecclesiastical state, as well as of the kingdom of Naples. During the few days which he passed at Terracina, he occupied the modest habitation of a private individual. Thence he went to visit the Pontine marshes, which are only at a few miles distance; and there he dispatched the ordinary business of the state, which admitted of no delay. Important affairs were postponed till his return. After a journey which lasted in all twelve days, he returned to Rome exceedingly well satisfied. According to the custom observed with all sovereigns, both great and small, such parts



only of the works that he went to see were shewn to him as were calculated to inspire him with brilliant hopes. He was even told, that in a year his great enterprize would be completed; and, by his orders, gold and silver medals were distributed to the workmen. He was desirous that every heart should partake of his joy. On his way out and home he travelled with pleasure along that noble road, which, since its re-establishment under his auspices, had changed its name from *Via Appia* to *Via Pia*; that road which still attracts the admiration of travellers, and which is perhaps the only thing really useful that has resulted from such a world of pains and expense. From that very time it was foreseen that the complete draining of the marshes would be impossible, because the water which covered them was lower than the sea, and because it was fed by the streams that flowed incessantly from the neighbouring mountains. To obviate this difficulty, Pius VI. ordered a new canal to be cut. Always aiming at brilliant enterprizes instead of useful undertakings, he conceived while upon the spot the idea of building a new city, in the midst of the land recovered from the water. A plan of it was drawn under his own inspection. This city, which was to contain ten thousand families, was to be a perfect square, intersected by a large canal intended to receive the water of

all the neighbouring streams. The canal itself was to fall into the sea, after having in its course favoured exportation and inland trade. The poverty of the Apostolical Chamber obliged Pius VI. to defer this project to better times. On his return he visited the lake of Fogliano, and the quarries of marble recently discovered in a mountain upon the coast; and went also to see what progress was making in the sumptuous buildings he was adding to the abbey of Subiaco. He was possessed of it before he arrived at the pontifical throne; and every thing that was nearly or distantly connected with it was to be embellished or enriched. He was constructing there a superb church, a seminary, and a palace; splendid, but useless and expensive works, which added not a little to the distress of the Roman finances, and which already indicated his ruinous taste for magnificence and show.

During this journey many sumptuous ruins were shewn to him, which appeared to have belonged to the ancient city of Sueffa-Pometia, and to the sumptuous edifices which formerly embellished the Appian way. Among these ruins had been found fragments of antique statues, inscriptions, bas-reliefs, and articles of furniture; some mutilated by time, others not at all disfigured. The pope immediately gave orders to collect these precious relics, and to reserve them

for the museum of the city it was his intention to found.

But Pius VI. never experienced any satisfaction unmixed with alloy. Unlucky accidents, or at least strong apprehensions, constantly obtruded themselves upon his joys, or disturbed his repose. Scarcely was he returned from the Pontine marshes, when he learned that the court of Naples envied him the brilliant fruit of his solicitude, and his principal claim to glory. The marquis della Sambucca, who, without having inherited the marquis di Tanucci's ill-will to the Holy See, had at that time personal reasons of complaint against Pius VI., was engaged, it was said, in drawing up a state paper, in which a great part of the Pontine marshes, and of the city of Terracina, was claimed as the property of the kingdom of Naples. Envy already saw, with uneasiness, a country, so closely bordering upon that kingdom, arrived at a high degree of cultivation; the miserable inhabitants of Abruzzo, led away by the attractions of this new Eden; a magnificent city rising in the midst of marshes; and the port of Terracina affording a safe shelter to small vessels, and rivalling that of Naples. This state paper actually appeared, and threw the pope into great consternation. He found some consolation, however, in the heart of the cardinal de Fernis;



often his severe censor, but always his friend. The pontifical archives were immediately searched, in order to procure materials for a complete refutation. These efforts of erudition, which would have been of no avail against the execution of a plan seriously in agitation, were in the present case useless, the malignity of the Neapolitan minister being satisfied, for this time, with the agonies into which he had thrown the holy father.

The uneasy jealousy of the court of Naples was, after all, premature; for the brilliant chimeras of Pius VI. were very far from being realised. Shortly after his return, several persons, among others the duke de Grimaldi, then Spanish ambassador, went to pay a visit to the Pontine marshes, and informed him on their return, no doubt in a lamentable tone, that the execution of his magnificent project was considered as impracticable. "The hidden springs never ceased to flow; and the bottom of the marsh was decidedly lower than the level of the sea. The part adjacent to the mountains promised an abundant harvest; but the opposite side was doomed to remain for ever under water." There might be some exaggeration in these alarming accounts; but the truth was, that the works had not by a great deal answered the brilliant expectations of the preceding year. Eighteen

hundred men were constantly employed ; but pestilential vapours had spread among them an epidemical disease ; and the heavy rains had caused considerable inundations. The seed was buried, and lay rotting under water. The proprietors of the land, deceived in their speculations, applied to the Apostolical Chamber for indemnity ; proved that the sluices intended as drains were not constructed according to the rules of art ; and attributed their losses to the unskillfulness of the engineers.

The eye of the master being deemed necessary a second time, Pius VI. repaired again to the spot, in order to investigate these evils, and, if possible, to apply a remedy. He arrived at Terracina ; and instead of receiving the tribute of gratitude, heard nothing but murmurs and complaints. Full of the objects which he had before his eyes, he wrote to Pallavicini, the secretary of state, that he was resolved that the great work, which he had so much at heart, should in future be carried on with greater activity. But there was a want of money ; and it could only be supplied by an increase of taxes, which provoked complaints of another kind. The pontiff was surrounded by rocks ; and whatever course he steered was sure to excite discontent, and to feel the same sentiment himself.

But what could he see, what could he determine upon with due deliberation, in journeys so rapidly performed? At the end of a few days he returned to Rome with such celerity, that his physician was alarmed for his health. Pius VI. alleged, as an excuse, the interests of so many religious societies, which would suffer by his absence; that of the generals of orders; and that of the whole catholic world, which stood so much in need of his paternal sollicitude. Sovereigns, merely temporal, find it so difficult to fulfil their immense task! What then is to be expected from those who are bound to attend equally to the affairs of heaven, and to those of the earth?

The works at the Pontine marshes went on, nevertheless, and the hopes of the pope began to revive, when another inundation, in 1783, gave him new alarm. He undertook a third journey thither, and found that the ravages of the water had been exaggerated. Vicar of the divinity on earth, he seemed to think that his presence re-established order among the elements, or that, like another Neptune, a *quos ego* from his mouth sufficed to overawe the waves. He set off discouraged, and almost in despair; he came back re-assured and contented. In the following year (1784) he also made a journey of a fortnight to the Pontine marshes, and brought



back with him the same confidence as to the success of his plan; but he was not yet at the end of his troubles. Not only censure, through the medium of Pasquin, lavished the most cruel sarcasms upon his darling enterprise; but the very persons who were the most attached to him endeavoured to dissuade him from it. In 1785, cardinal Orsini, having crossed the Pontine marshes on his return from Naples, afflicted him with the most discouraging objections. Foreigners, more impartial in their observations, were equally liberal of their criticism upon this favourite offspring of his vanity. An English traveller expressed himself thus in 1787: \* “ The execution of this plan has been ill managed; experience having proved that there is not a sufficient declivity to carry off the water. After ten years labour there is not so much land drained as there was in the time of Augustus; and the air is become still more unwholesome. Besides, is there not in the ecclesiastical state more good land than its population (2,200,000 souls) can cultivate? With half the money a much more advantageous result might have been obtained. Works so long and so expensive have

\* This English author is so vaguely indicated, that it has not been possible to discover the original text: it has therefore been necessary to re-translate the translation.

produced no advantage but the re-establishment of the Appian way, which for a tenth part of the sum might have been completely restored."

The judicious Archenholtz, in his work concerning Italy, expresses himself with still greater severity. He applauds the undertaking in itself, but considers the means as very inadequate, and the result as very unsatisfactory. According to him, the wages of the workmen are too small; their habitations are miserable huts, where, almost as naked as savages, and as pale and livid as ghosts, they go to rest themselves after their dangerous labours. This project, conceived by the pope with the best intention, became, in the hands of the Apostolical Chamber, which presided over its execution, one of those ruinous puerilities, with which it dazzled the vulgar, and satiated its own thirst of gold.

But all these criticisms, and all this opposition which he met with from human passions, and from the elements, did not discourage Pius VI. The spring of 1787 saw him appear again in the supposed theatre of his glory. This time he convinced himself with his own eyes of the ravages occasioned by the inundations. His favourite nephew, the duke di Nemi, who was in possession of a part of the drained land, on seeing the unfortunate result of so much labour, endeavoured to prevail upon him to desist. The un-

undertaking had already cost a million of Roman crowns. All the money he could command was already exhausted; but not so the perseverance, or, more properly speaking, the obstinacy of the holy father. The work was continued, but with great tardiness, and upon a scale proportioned to the smallness of his resources. In vain did the project-makers, particularly one Muller, who had the superintendence of the custom-house and the tolls, devise new ones. They only served to irritate the impoverished subject, and to render the sovereign odious, without producing the means of defraying such an enormous expense. In short, after so much anxiety, and after twelve years labour, the whole country, extending from Cisterna to Terracina, was no more than a frightful and pestilential morass, except a few spots of ground restored to cultivation, a handsome road, and a canal, which bears the name of *Linea Pia*.

The following year was witness to another journey to the Pontine marshes, and to new pecuniary efforts for the carrying on of the works. Under the pretence of securing a part at least of the treasures of our lady of Loretto from the plundering hands of the Algerines, bars of silver, of the value of 400,000 Roman crowns, were taken thence, and carried to the Apostolical Chamber; which paid the *Santa Casa* interest at three and a



half per cent. A large portion of this sum was said to have been expended on the marshes; in other words, was, in the public opinion, as good as thrown away; for malevolence was more and more busy in decrying the enterprise. *Sono andate alle paludi Pontine* (they are gone to the Pontine marshes), was a proverb current throughout the Roman state, when any one wished to speak of sums of money expended in extravagant schemes.

In passing through the streets of Rome, Pius VI. often heard himself called *il seccatore*\*, a nick-name of a double meaning; alluding at once to his rage for *drying up* the marshes, and to the inconvenience suffered by the people upon that account. In short, he derived nothing but maledictions and sarcasms from the only operation which ought to have thrown a lustre upon his pontificate. In the eyes of his subjects it was no more than a folly of which they were obliged to pay the expense, and by which they profited little; foreigners alone enjoying the fruit of so much labour, and such immense sums of money. When they travelled along the noble Appian way, restored by Pius VI., they did not see the treasures swallowed up by the surround-

\* From *seccare* to dry. A stupid thing or troublesome fellow, in vulgar English *a bore*, is in Italian conversation called *una seccatura*. T.

ing marshes; they did not see the multitude of wretches who had died a lingering death, victims to the pestilential vapours that exhaled from them. They applauded the brilliant result of these laborious and dangerous works as we admire the astonishing pyramids of Egypt, without thinking of the myriads of slaves employed in their construction, or as the giddy multitude admires some splendid *fête*, given by a rich man embarrassed in his affairs, where the company enjoy themselves, and the manager triumphs, while his needy creditors are bursting with rage.

The principal end of this undertaking, that of purifying the air, is far from having been attained. Travellers tremble while driving the six posts and a half, that these marshes extend along the Appian way, particularly the first that occurs on leaving Terracina. Nothing, however, announces the danger that environs them. It is true that the brilliant verdure, of which they have an extensive prospect on either hand, consists of little else than rushes, which occupy almost the whole of the space that is not covered with timber or brush-wood; and from this single indication they easily divine that they are travelling across a morass. But at the same time the horizon seems as serene as in the rest of Italy, and the air appears as free from vapours

as in the most salubrious country. They only perceive at a distance the ridge of the Apennines covered with clouds, pretty much as the summits of high mountains generally are; but woful experience ought to put them upon their guard against these deceitful appearances. It is impossible for them to drive with too much speed through this district, where death seems to have established his empire. They ought above all to avoid passing the Pontine marshes by night, or even at its approach. Woe to him who closes his eyes during this dangerous journey: he runs a great risk of never opening them again. The livid countenances of those, whom want, or habit, confines to this spot, sufficiently attest its unhealthiness. Their languishing existence is, little else than death more or less prolonged. Hence it is that scarcely any habitations are to be seen upon the road, except those which are intended for the service of the post. The wretches who occupy them inspire a degree of compassion which it is difficult to conceal from them; and they themselves are aware of the flightiness of the thread on which their life depends. A few years ago a traveller perceiving a group of these animated spectres, asked them, how they contrived *to live* in such a country? *We die*, answered they. The traveller was struck with this sublime and mournful laconism; which



will enable the reader to form a judgment of the country, of its inhabitants, and of the services rendered to them by Pius VI.

However, while meaning to be humane and compassionate, let us take care not to be unjust. The making of a noble road between Rome and Naples is certainly of some advantage to the Romans, and to the inhabitants of part of the ecclesiastical state; since, by facilitating the communication between the two largest cities in Italy, it is calculated to vivify the intermediate country. Before the restoration of the Appian way, there was no going from one to the other without taking a circuitous route through Foglia, ascending the sides of the Apennines, and afterwards descending to Terracina, by Sernone and Piperno.

But, as to that part of the magnificent plan adopted by Pius VI. which tended directly to an useful end, it must be confessed that the improvements were very defective. All the works were undertaken and paid for by the Apostolical Chamber, and the sums of money appropriated to them were for the most part abandoned to the depredations of its agents. Some portions of the marshes were, however, fitted for cultivation, and farmed out by the Apostolical Chamber to inhabitants, whom repeated inun-

dations often obliged to apply for relief. Pius VI., little scrupulous as to the means of enriching his family, was almost the only one who profited by the clear produce of his expensive undertaking. He had found means to form a handsome appanage for one of his nephews, out of the country recovered from the water; but this was only an additional grievance to his impoverished subjects. The French republic avenged them by confiscating that part of the land in question which belonged to the duke di Nemi.

It has been calculated that the sums employed in these vain attempts would have sufficed to fertilise and restore to a flourishing condition a great deal of ground in the ecclesiastical state, which bears witness to the sloth of its old government. Pius VI. sacrificed useful undertakings to vain glory. Magnificent roads, bridges and palaces, decorated with his arms, and bearing his name, appeared more seductive to his vanity than fields covered with abundant crops. He has also left much to be done for the draining of the Pontine marshes. Immediately after the occupation of the ecclesiastical state by the republican troops, a company of Frenchmen undertook the completion of this business, but were obliged to relinquish it for

want of the necessary funds. It will, no doubt, be one of the first undertakings of the new Roman government.

It remains to be said, that this great enterprise was one of the principal causes of the ruin of the Roman finances. Their disorder, when Pius VI. obtained the tiara, was already great. It was increased by that pontiff's avidity, by his taste for ostentation, and by his prodigality towards his nephews. Far from remedying the abuses of an administration radically defective, he augmented them by his weakness and by his example. This is what we are about to develop in the following chapters.



## CHAPTER VIII.

*Vices of the Roman Administration; particularly of  
that of Pius VI.*

**W**E shall not undertake to describe in detail the form of the Roman government which has been recently destroyed. It will suffice to say, that no one was ever more complicated, nor was ever any one less answerable to the real end of all government, that of ruling mankind by the mere force of the laws, and of encouraging them, by rewards held out to industry, to labour for their own happiness. It may, therefore, be said without exaggeration, that no country was ever worse administered than the ecclesiastical state, especially in these latter times. Pius VI. appeared at first to be sensible of its defects, and to have conceived the project of removing them. He appointed a congregation of cardinals, who were particularly enjoined to find a remedy for the disorder of the finances; and to give the taxes a form less burdensome to the state, and less intolerable to individuals. He only felt an inclination to do good by starts; and, though pretty much inclined to despotism, never had

that strong volition which sometimes renders despots supportable, by impelling them to the performance of works of utility. At the first aspect of danger he displayed something like courage; but was frightened as soon as he had leisure to contemplate it. Obstacles at first seemed only to strengthen his resolution; but he soon implored the assistance of Italian craft in order to evade them, or else undid all that he had done. He was particularly fearful of appearing to be governed; and yet he was often so; but it was rather through fear, with which he was easily inspired, than by the ascendancy of affectionate sentiments, or by that of reason.

He began his reign, however, by several measures which seemed to indicate firmness, and a sincere desire to put an end to the disorder of the finances. He even gave, in that department, a proof of severity, which had well nigh involved him in a quarrel with the two crowns, whose friendship it was most his interest to cultivate. Scarcely had Clement XIV. closed his eyes, when Nicholas Bischi, his relation and friend, whom he had placed at the head of the administration of provisions, was suddenly called upon to give an account of the expenditure of 900,000 thousand crowns, which he had received for the purpose of buying corn during a great scarcity. Pius VI., who had made a great pa-

trade of integrity during the time he was treasurer, wished to support his reputation, by prosecuting without mercy an administrator suspected of dishonest conduct. He even manifested upon this occasion a degree of animosity, which made the French and Spanish ministers accuse him of persecuting Bischi less as a peculator than as the favourite of Clement XIV., and of wishing to bring an odium upon the government of that pontiff. Notwithstanding the influence which the two ministers already possessed in a variety of respects, Bischi was obliged to stand a trial; the result of which was very unfavourable, since he was condemned to refund 242,000 crowns, though he produced vouchers for the expenditure of all the sums intrusted to him, and had already given in his accounts to Clement XIV., by whom they had been approved. This sentence was rather dictated by prejudice than by severe equity. It was particularly promoted by Livizzani, a prelate, a furious partisan of the Jesuits, and an implacable enemy to any one who was hostile to their interests. Never, perhaps, did Pius VI. shew more tenacity than upon this occasion. He obstinately refused to grant Bischi a respite of eight days, which he requested, in order to draw up a justification. In vain did the cardinal de Bernis, and the duke de Grimaldi, then Spanish ambassador, intercede in



Bischi's behalf. His sentence was executed with the utmost rigour, and his property sold much under its value, to make good the sum he was bound to replace. The two ministers of the house of Bourbon endeavoured at least to make the prelate Livizzani expiate the indecent partiality with which he sought to injure the memory of Clement XIV. But Livizzani was, nevertheless, promoted very shortly after to the legation of Urbino, and found his conduct upon this occasion no impediment to his attainment of a cardinal's hat. All that the king of Spain could do in favour of Bischi, who was more unfortunate than guilty, was to rescue him from indigence, by granting him a pension of 1500 Roman crowns.

But it was not long ere the zeal of Pius VI., for the prosecution of peculators, began to cool. From the very first years of his pontificate abuses of every kind had made an alarming progress, and the people, deceived in almost all their hopes, began to murmur aloud. A general clamour arose, particularly against the Apostolical Chamber.

That name alone awakens the idea of the most incapable and most disastrous administration. It is well known that it had the supreme direction of the finances in all their principal branches. It was less a ministry, than an aggre-

gation of ministers; who, under different titles, were charged to receive, to preserve, to dispense, and to defend the public treasure; and who, most frequently, acquitted themselves of these various functions with equal rapacity and ignorance. The first post in the Apostolical Chamber was held by the cardinal *Camerlingo*, who might be compared to the *quaestors* of ancient Rome. His office was the first in modern Rome, and was still more closely connected with the government of the church than of the state. Its origin was as remote as the early times of Christianity; and in rank it was only below the papal dignity. As soon as a sovereign pontiff died, the cardinal *Camerlingo* took possession of the honours of the papacy, and became a kind of regent; his authority, and the honours paid to him, lasting as long as the conclave. So eminent a place was calculated to give great influence to him who occupied it. It was conferred in the reign of Clement XIII. upon cardinal Rezzonico, who preserved it during the two following pontificates to the moment of the Roman revolution. But the cardinal, unlike his brother, who had well nigh embroiled the church and a great part of Europe by means of his famous monitory against the duke of Parma, was of a mild and moderate disposition; and though he was the nominal chief

of the party of the *zelanti*, and so long occupied the first dignity at Rome, never possessed any great share of influence.

The cardinal *Camerlingo* was then, properly speaking, at the head of the Apostolical Chamber; and none of the edicts of that supreme council had any force, unless subscribed with his name; but under cardinal Rezzonico this signature was little more than an empty formality.

Immediately under the *camerlingo*, was the *treasurer*. Braschi, during fifteen years, had filled this place; the most important in the pope's administration. The treasurer possessed, rather in fact than by right, an almost absolute authority over every thing relating to the imposts. He had it in his power to abuse this authority with impunity; which sufficiently implies that it was frequently abused.

When the treasurer conducted himself like an honest man, as it appears that Braschi did, it is natural to suppose that malversations were not common: but he was assisted by three deputies, between whom the whole ecclesiastical state was divided. It was among them particularly that obstinacy was found united with unfeeling ignorance. They had a very small salary; but they were so rapacious, and received so many presents, that they soon acquired a scandalous opulence.



The treasurer had immediately under him the commissary of the Apostolical Chamber. He it was who transacted business with all the grantees and farmers of the state. His favour, which was seldom bestowed gratuitously, was indispensably necessary to them. If they were unfortunate enough to displease him, there was no chicane which they might not expect, nor any exactions to which they were not liable. He was charged to enforce all the real or pretended claims of the Apostolical Chamber.

Thus, however pure might be the intentions of the heads of office, every thing was subject to the caprices and to the rapacity of underlings. Braschi, when elevated to the dignity of cardinal, was succeeded in his post of treasurer by the prelate Palotta, one of the most upright men in Rome, and even one of the most enlightened. His manner was rude and repulsive; he was the dread of intriguers and knaves; but he could not reach them in the shade under which they contrived to conceal themselves. He attempted to effect several useful reforms; but, counteracted by his inferiors in office, and ill seconded by the pope himself, he was able to give proofs of little more than of his zeal and understanding. Pius VI. held him in great esteem. When he raised him to the cardinalate, he suffered him to keep his place contrary to custom; but, in-

constant in his affections, and inconsistent in all his measures, he was unjust that he might not appear ungrateful. He was indebted for the beginning of his good fortune to the house of Ruffo. A cardinal of that name, being struck with his fine person, shewed him particular attention, and took him into his house, when he first arrived at Rome from Cesena, while still a very young man. But Benedict XIV. being in want of a secretary, cardinal Ruffo recommended Braschi, who wrote a very fine hand, and whose services were accepted by the pope. This favour, to which he was indebted for the commencement of his fortunate career, had made a deep impression upon his mind. A prelate, nephew to his benefactor, was at Rome. He was an enlightened man, brilliant even in his vices, immoral, and perfectly well calculated for intrigue. He spared nothing to attract the attention of a pope, who was the creature of his house; flattered the vanity of the pontiff, and easily obtained a place in a heart already predisposed in his favour by gratitude. Pius VI. thought it incumbent on him to acquit himself of his debt at the expense of the virtuous cardinal Palotta, and conferred on the prelate Ruffo the place of treasurer of the Apostolical Chamber. He could not make a choice more likely to excite the public indignation against him;

and at the same time to gratify his own rapacity. Ruffo, destitute of all scruples as to himself, felt none while favouring the prevailing passions of the pontiff; his vanity, his prodigality, and his blind attachment to his family. Fearing, in his turn to be deficient in gratitude, he encouraged Pius VI. in his seductive, but disastrous projects; and, without forgetting himself, enriched the pope's nephews in the most scandalous manner. It is thus that, by an interchange of favours conferred and received, weaknesses, and even vices, sometimes assume the specious appearance of gratitude.

This prelate, Ruffo, contributed, more than all the other ministers employed during the long pontificate of Pius VI. to render him odious to the Roman people; and to impel the government to its ruin, by increasing its debt to a degree hitherto unknown. When Braschi was himself treasurer, and presented, in 1766, the accounts of the Apostolical Chamber, its debts amounted to sixty-one millions of crowns. In 1789 they had increased to eighty-seven. The criminal complaisance of Ruffo had, in compliance with the ruinous caprices of the pope, issued an enormous quantity of *cedole*. That paper money was at six or seven per cent. discount; and articles of the first necessity had risen to an intolerable price; for the police of grain



was, in the ecclesiastical state, the source of the greatest abuses, and might, at some moment or other, become that of the greatest disasters. The country, though indifferently cultivated, might have sufficed for the subsistence of the inhabitants. In good years, notwithstanding defective husbandry, there was sometimes a surplus of wheat to export; but in dry seasons every kind of crop failed, and both men and cattle were famished. The government was in this respect entirely destitute of foresight; it *lived from hand to mouth*; that is to say, the governed were often upon the point of starving. The Roman nobility and the cardinals had always resources in the produce of their farms; but when the crops were bad, the rest of the Roman people ran a risk of experiencing the most dreadful famine.

These abuses, and these dangers, proceeded above all from the manner in which the pope's subjects were supplied with provisions. At the head of the department of subsistence was a præfect of the *annona*, who superintended the whole ecclesiastical state, except the three legations (those of Bologna, Ferrara, and the presidency of the duchy of Urbino). It was he who was particularly charged with the victualling of Rome. All exportation of corn was forbid; and the farmers were exposed to the most cruel impositions; the government buying up almost

all their crops at its own price. It retained, however, the power of enriching persons in favour, by granting them particular permissions to export. Thus every thing was calculated to excite complaints, and render misery infallible. This branch of the public affairs was managed with so little address, that it did not even enrich itself while impoverishing the people; but, on the contrary, within the two last years incurred a debt of two millions of crowns. Hence it was that the French, when they occupied the ecclesiastical state, found agriculture in the most deplorable situation. Ill-advised in all its plans, even in those which seemed to have the public welfare for their object, the government had devised a plan highly injurious to the cultivator, with a view of reviving the spirit of agriculture. The general sloth, which proceeded much less from the disposition of the inhabitants than from the vices of the government, suffered a great part of this country, so much favoured by nature, to lay totally waste. Along the banks of the Adriatic sea the fertility of the soil was turned at least to some account; that district producing corn, pulse, oil, wine, wood, hemp, wool, and silk, in tolerable abundance; but on the opposite coast not a twentieth part of the land was in a state of cultivation. What did the Roman government contrive under the pontificate of

Pius VI. in order to remedy this evil? It authorised the farmers of estates to till any land in their neighbourhood, whether comprised in their lease or not; but as this permission might prove too weak an excitement to sloth, it decreed, that, where farmers neglected to avail themselves of it, the præfect of the *annona* might send a plough into the waste lands, and have them sown on account of the Apostolical Chamber. After this they were to remain at his mercy as long as he might think proper. The farmer was thus dispossessed of his rights, and the proprietor was forced to accept, as the rent of his land, thus cultivated without his consent, whatever it produced in a state of pasturage. Never did government seem to carry its paternal solicitude to a greater length. To stand thus in the place of its children! To take upon itself the trouble at which their indolence recoiled! What a sublime conception of philanthropy! But it is well known how those concerns are managed, which are undertaken by even the most active and most enlightened governments. The reason why the fine plan devised by that of Rome did not prove more disastrous was its being put very imperfectly into execution. The decay of agriculture in the ecclesiastical state proceeded from a radical vice; from that establishment of the *annona*, an endless source of oppression, and the cause of



the most scandalous monopoly. Before the reign of the great duke Leopold, Tuscany was cursed with a similar institution. It was destroyed; and since that period the Tuscan agriculture has been in the most flourishing state. But Rome seemed to be the favourite country of prejudices of every kind, which appeared to be sanctioned by long custom, as well as by religion itself. So many people were interested in their preservation, that their destruction could never come from the interior. Diffolution was inevitable; a violent overthrow almost impossible. Besides, profane and sacred abuses were so interwoven in a government, where the throne was upon the altar, that it appeared impossible to touch the former without attacking the latter. Of whatever nature they may be, they are always intimately connected. Of this France affords us a proof. Who did not desire, in 1789, the abolition of *corvées*, the suppression of gabels, the equal distribution of the taxes, &c.? But no sooner was the accomplishment of this unanimous wish in agitation, than the impulsion given by enthusiasm reached all other abuses, in spite of those who were interested in their preservation.

But let us return to the other vicious institutions which existed at the accession of Pius VI., and which only grew worse during his pontificate.

It was not enough for the subjects of the pope to lie at the mercy of his government in regard to their supply of corn ; but they were also condemned to suffer the same hardship with respect to meat and oil. The government, as if it had conspired against the land-holders, taxed the beasts that were brought to market at a low price, and did not easily grant permission to export them. How then could any one have an interest in breeding cattle ? Government also enjoyed the monopoly of oil. All that was produced in the ecclesiastical state was brought to Rome ; and there the price was fixed by the department of *La Grascia*, which afterwards sold it to the retail dealers. The result of the means taken to furnish the Roman people with provisions, in abundance, and at a cheap rate, was, that meat, bread, and oil, were scarce, and consequently dear ; that the supply of the latter, which the ecclesiastical state might have produced in sufficient quantity to do without the assistance of foreigners, often failed ; that there was an annual necessity for importing a large quantity from the kingdom of Naples ; and that the establishments charged with these monopolies ruined the people while they were ruining themselves. Hence it was that the populace, in these latter times, often broke out into murmurs ; and that the pope, while passing through

the streets of Rome, and distributing benedictions, the only thing which he lavished upon his *faithful subjects*, was more than once greeted with these alarming words: *Holy father, it is not benedictions that we want; it is meat and oil.* But the Roman people were sensible of their own weakness, as well as of that of their government; and seemed to wait, like the man in the gospel afflicted with the palsy, for some kind hand to throw them into the pool.

Manufactures, commerce, every thing at Rome partook of this weakness; the certain harbinger of an approaching dissolution.

In the ecclesiastical state there were several manufactories of common linen, for the use of the lower classes of people.

There was also at Rome a manufactory of tapestry, wrought with considerable art into excellent imitations of the finest pictures; but it was only one of those establishments of parade which tend rather to impoverish than to benefit the subject. We shall pass over in silence a few manufactories of silk, a little above mediocrity. Pius VI., while treasurer, had persuaded Clement XIV. to establish, at the expense of the Apostolical Chamber, manufactories of cotton; which have had the fate of all those that governments manage on their own account. Hats, even those of the finest quality, and some filken



stuffs, were also manufactured, and not altogether without success; but the only branch of industry which really flourished, in spite of the vices of administration, was the tanning of leather.

As to commerce, every thing seemed to conspire against its prosperity. In no country was it burdened with more prohibitions; and that disastrous system was still further extended by Pius VI. To ensure the success of the cotton manufactory, which he considered as his own work, he imposed, in 1777, a duty of 24 per cent. upon all foreign cottons. Hence resulted, as always happens in similar cases, an encouragement, not for the manufactory which it is intended to secure against rivalry, but for contraband trade. Besides, nothing could be exported without the permission of the prelates, who presided over the different establishments; and these exceptions to the general rule were not granted without difficulty, and experienced in their execution a number of impediments and delays. The production which alone, perhaps, ought to have been kept in the country, was very easily exported: this was the wool, which is of an excellent quality, and might have employed a great number of hands. But instead of doing so, it was sent in great quantities to France and Switzerland; came back afterwards

manufactured; and the poor Romans, who might have clothed themselves with their own hands, and with their own wool, were condemned to pay the wages of foreign industry. Some manufactories of fine cloth were, however, set up; among others, that which is known at Rome by the name of St. Michael. But their administration was so expensive, that although they produced cloth very little inferior to those of France and England, the latter were preferred, because they could be had at a cheaper rate. These were far from being the only commodities for which the Roman people were tributary to foreigners. The imports into the ecclesiastical state were enormously great. Some idea of this may be formed by a single article. A few years since it was calculated, that the chocolate it received annually from abroad amounted to near two millions of Roman crowns.

The Apostolical Chamber, by its bad management, was responsible for all these causes of impoverishment. The finances, of which it administered the principal branches, visibly decayed in their hands. It was always very difficult to ascertain with precision the revenue of the ecclesiastical state. The most authentic calculations made it amount to two millions and a half of Roman crowns (about 600,000 l. sterling), including the produce of the custom-house, and

of the receipts of the *datario*, and of the chancery. The territorial revenue which it collected might alone have been made to produce eight hundred thousand Roman crowns; but as it was farmed out by favour and intrigue, it scarcely yielded four hundred and fifty thousand. Carelessness and incapacity did more mischief in the ecclesiastical state than the most cruel extortions, and the most scandalous depredations, do in others. There was no great grievance to complain of; and yet disorder prevailed every where. The causes of dissolution, that were silently acting upon this country, resembled those chronic disorders which, though unattended by violent pains, lead to an inevitable and approaching death.

The government not only wanted sufficient energy and information for the administration of the finances, and for the encouragement of industry, but also for the repression of crimes, in a country where every thing conspired to render them common; the influence of a burning climate; idleness; a want of education; and the hope of impunity founded upon the privileges attached to a number of places and persons. It was particularly at Rome that all these causes of disorder had a powerful influence. During the eleven years that the pontificate of Clement XIII. lasted, ten thousand murders were com-



mitted in the ecclesiastical state, and near four thousand in the capital alone.

Almost all modern Romans had at hand the means of speedily satisfying their anger or their vengeance. There were few who did not carry pocket pistols; and they were still better provided with their favourite weapon, the stiletto. In vain did prohibitions proscribe the use of those murderous instruments. Respected only by those in regard to whom they were unnecessary, they were infringed by those whose malignity rendered them formidable, and by the multitude of idle persons attached to the service of the prelates, cardinals, and grandees. One of the prerogatives of those illustrious personages was to be surrounded with assassins; the government, which passed for a mild one, because it was weak, having little regard for the life of the citizens, but, at the same time, a great respect for privileges. These fatal immunities extended every where. To enjoy them it was sufficient to be under the protection of a foreign power, and particularly of a foreign priest. Of this a striking instance occurred in 1784.

Don Miguel Espinosa, a Spanish priest, committed a forgery upon the Roman bank. It was a capital offence, and the fact was ascertained; but he had a double claim to the indulgence of the government. The governor of Rome sent

his agents to his apartments; and the priest with great composure, shewed them the notes that he had forged. Compliments being paid him upon the excellence of the imitation, he named one of his friends, who had sent him from Naples the paper on which they were fabricated; and gave some of them to the agents of the governor, in order that they might be compared with the genuine bills. The resemblance was found to be perfect. As the place of governor of Rome led to the dignity of cardinal, he who occupied it did not wish to mar his fortune by an act of severe justice. He had an interview with Pallavicini, the secretary of state, who enjoined him secrecy, and afterwards waited upon the Spanish ambassador. They sent for Don Miguel, who confessed that he had been several years at Rome soliciting a benefice; that as yet he had been able to obtain nothing from the pope but hopes; that having spent the little money he brought with him, he had no other means of existence left but that of forging the *cedole*; and that the amount of those which he had already put into circulation was not less than five thousand crowns. The minister and the cardinal looked at each other, astonished at the frankness of the culprit; but the question was to avoid a publicity disgraceful to Don Miguel's nation, and to save the church from so

scandalous a reproach. At the same time, as it was not right to let a *poor wretch* starve who was about to be deprived of his only resource, the cardinal agreed that he should be allowed a pension of twenty crowns a month, till such time as a *good* benefice should be given him. Don Miguel, on his part, had the goodness to promise not to forge any more *cedole*, provided the cardinal kept his word. And this was what was called a mild government.

Some years after a fact occurred, which shews how justice was administered at Rome, and what were the means devised by Pius VI. to supply the want of a vigilant police. It is mentioned by Gorani, who asserts that he had it from the Spanish ambassador.

Rovaglio, the pope's watchmaker, who lived in one of the most frequented streets of Rome, had run some risk of being robbed during the night. He went to complain to the prelate, since cardinal, Busca, then governor of Rome, who promised that a watch should be set over his house. The robbers, as well as the watchmaker, knew the worth of such a promise, and determined to take their revenge. But Rovaglio, who was prepared for them, supplied the defect of the police; and a second time they missed their aim. The pope seeing Rovaglio shortly after, asked him for an account of his ad-



venture, and furnished him with an expedient, characteristic at once of the pontiff, and of the government of Rome. *You must be hard put to it indeed, said he, to rid yourself of these robbers. In the name of God, why do you not provide yourself with muskets and pistols. Fire upon the rogues; and, in case of your killing them, I give you absolution before-hand.* Could a government which thus avowed its impotence expect a long duration? Accordingly several years before its overthrow, the Romans themselves said, by way of accounting for its preservation, that it was *a perpetual miracle of St. Peter.*

The Jews were, perhaps, the only persons who had reason to complain of the severity, not to say of the cruelty, of the Roman government. Fanaticism, by turns ferocious and absurd, had dictated the laws beneath which they groaned, and which had acquired an increase of rigour under the pontificate of Pius VI. As long ago as the year 1775, the pontiff, persuaded that the laws of humanity were not made for infidels, had issued against them the most barbarous edict. Confined within their infectious quarter, the *Ghetto*, they could only shew themselves in the rest of the city by day, and were bound to return to their prison at sun-set, under *pain of death.* If they wished to go into the country for a few days, to breathe a purer air, they were

obliged to solicit a particular permission. They were forbid, under the penalty of the gallies, to approach the convent of the Annonciada, or to be seen in any church, convent, or hospital, of Rome. All intercourse with Christians was forbidden them; and they incurred corporal punishment if they dared to keep a servant of that religion. A Christian could not admit them into his coach, nor even lend them one. It was only upon a journey that they were allowed the use of a carriage. As a mark of reprobation, neither men nor women could go out without wearing some badge of a yellow colour. Their interment was attended with no funeral pomp; nor did any inscription designate their tomb, and recall them to the recollection of those to whom they had once been dear.

These laws were not rigorously observed. Several were grown obsolete; and others carried with them, in their very severity, a sure pledge of their non-execution. But the stigma they affixed, to those against whom they were levelled, was indelible. They might be enforced at any time without a moment's warning: attempts were sometimes made to do so; and the Jews dragged on a miserable existence under the continual influence of terror. It was by dint of gold that some of them purchased momentary favours; such, for instance, as their en-

largement from the infectious prison in which the rest of the sect was confined. Avarice, which at Rome neglected no means of gratification, sold to these unfortunate victims a few acts of toleration; and it was in the residence of him, who called himself the vicar of a merciful God, a God of charity, that these attacks were made upon human nature. Nor was this all. In a still more barbarous age, if it be possible, in the fifteenth century, the idea was conceived of assimilating the Jews to the brute creation, by making them run, during the carnival, for the diversion of the public, and in presence of the sovereign pontiff himself. There were at Rome Jew races, as there were horse-races elsewhere. At length they were exempted from this servile abasement; but, that they might not lose the remembrance of such an act of kindness, or rather to prolong their humiliation, they were obliged to send, to the chief magistrate of Rome, an annual deputation, which, in the most humble posture, paid a hundred crowns as a mark of their gratitude. The capitol was the scene of this unworthy imitation of the homages, which the tributary kings of Asia formerly came to pay to the Roman senate.

Plagued in every outward act of life, the Jews of Rome were also tormented in their conscience. By virtue of an injunction, equally ridi-



culous and barbarous, they were obliged every sabbath to hear a sermon, in which a Dominican, with a thundering voice, endeavoured to convert them by maledictions; and shewed them hell gaping to swallow them up, if they did not hasten to take refuge in the bosom of the church. In vain did the poor wretches strive to elude these periodical exhortations, equally tiresome and useless. They conceived the idea of stopping up their ears. Their ears were subjected to the examination of their tormentors. They slept, or feigned to sleep. They were shook till they awoke; and no resource remained but coughing, spitting, and yawning. At length they came out of church somewhat worse Christians than they went in; some laughing at the imbecility of their tyrants, and others cursing a religion which employed such means, in order to make profelytes. It may be truly said, that Pius VI., who, by a few good actions performed during his long career, had incurred some little suspicion of humanity; it may be truly said, that he laid a greater load of intolerance upon these unfortunate victims than any one of his predecessors. They had more than one tribute to pay to his rapacity; of which the effects were so fatal to himself, and the produce so ill employed. He seemed to have an exclusive taste for brilliant enterprises. Those which were only

useful had no charms for his vanity. Instead of burying millions in the Pontine marshes ; instead of impoverishing his treasury to enrich the sacristy of St. Peter's, to embellish his abbey of Subiaco, and to establish at Cesena, his native place, a sumptuous library, which he could very well have dispensed with ; why did he not employ the surplus of his revenue in carrying on the repairs, begun by his predecessors, in the port of Ancona ? in confining to their beds the rivers of La Romagna and of the Ferrarese ; in draining the marshes of those two provinces ; and in thus restoring to salubrity and fertility a country formerly so wholesome, and in so high a state of cultivation ? The only means which he employed to improve it consisted in the making and repairing of roads ; and even this was done by oppressive means, which served only to add to the misery of the people. Contractors attended at the Apostolical Chamber, and proposed to him the making of a new road. Their plan met with his approbation. They advanced the money for its execution ; but, in order to reimburse them afterwards, the parishes interested in the work were arbitrarily taxed by the Apostolical Chamber. The pope had thus, it must be confessed, made several new roads, and had repaired the old ones ; and, at the moment when he finished his pontificate, it

was the part of his administration the least neglected. But to how much discontent did he give rise, even when busied in undertakings which, if better contrived, might have been useful to the people? He appeared insensible to their murmurs. Captivated with every thing that was likely to spread his fame to distant regions, he interested himself little in the public welfare. The father of the faithful forgot that he ought also to be the father of his subjects. He took no concern but for himself and his family; and even his affection for his nephews was only a modification of self-love. The errors into which he was led by that sentiment, the offspring of his vanity, will be the subject of the following chapter.

employed to improve it consisted in the building and repairing of roads; and even this was done by oppressive means, which served only to add to the misery of the people. Constantine attended at the Apostolical Chamber and proposed to him the making of a new road. Their plan met with his approbation. They advanced the money for its execution; but in order to reimburse them afterwards, the papal officers, who were arbitrarily taxed by the Apostolical Chamber. The pope had thus, it will be confessed, made himself poor, and had repaired the old ones, and at the moment when he finished his pontificate.



## CHAPTER IX.

*Nepotism of Pius VI.*

THE blind affection of the Roman pontiffs for their family, and particularly for their nephews, in whom, in default of children they could acknowledge, they seemed to see their existence renewed, often occasioned, in the government of modern Rome, a disorder almost unknown in other governments. The nephews of the popes generally filled the place of the favourites and mistresses of other sovereigns. The abuses thence resulting, though somewhat less scandalous, were not the less deplorable. Other despots may change their favourites and their mistresses; may strip them, after having enriched them; and may withdraw the confidence and credit of which they shew themselves unworthy. The mischief which is done by, and for them, may not be altogether irreparable. This is not the case with the pope's nephews. The vanity of the uncle protects them from all danger of inconsistency. His weakness insures them the easy acquirement of an ascendancy, and the certainty of retaining it. The families of an hereditary

sovereign possess a permanent estate, independent of the life of a single man. The fortune of the relations of an elective sovereign depend upon the duration of his reign: consequently as the popes are chosen at an advanced age, it was not uncommon to see their nephews like the favourites of old Galba,

~~—~~ S'empresser ardemment,  
A qui dévoreroit le règne d'un moment\*.

The pontificate of Pius VI. united all these inconveniences; and the length of it carried them to an unexampled pitch. That of Clement XIII. had lasted but a short time; long enough, however, to develop the abuses of nepotism. He invested two of his nephews with the Roman purple; and it is well known what fatal consequences had well nigh resulted to him from the ascendancy which he suffered one of them to obtain.

Under his successor, Ganganelli, the very name of nepotism was almost forgotten. Equally destitute of the advantages of birth and fortune, he retained the modesty of his first condition. \* He declared, on assuming the tiara, that he would live like an apostle; and he kept his word. He did little or nothing for his family.

\* Eager to devour the reign of a moment.

Two of his nephews, who were sent for to the college of Rome without his knowledge, were presented to him. *If you study, said he, I will take care of you. If you are idle, I will send you back to your relations.* During the five years that their uncle's pontificate lasted, the favours they obtained from him were very trifling. They wept at his death; and though Clement XIV. possessed all the virtues which conciliate affection and esteem, theirs were almost the only tears that were shed. Nothing was done to console them.

Upon the accession of Pius VI. it was not suspected that he would revive an abuse which had grown obsolete during the reign of his predecessor. The cardinal de Bernis wrote thus to Versailles: *He is the last of his name: there is therefore no nepotism to be feared.*

*Il s'en présentera, gardez-vous d'en douter\*.*

Pius VI., who had, in fact, no male relation of his own name, began by announcing the most exemplary disinterestedness in regard to the preferment of his family. Having a promotion of cardinals to make about two months after his election, he was much pressed to give a hat to his uncle, prelate Bandi, an obscure, but worthy

\* Relations, be assured, will present themselves.



old man, who was bishop of Imola; but he refused with a firmness which seemed to be of excellent augury, as well as every thing else that was remarked in him during the first months of his reign. The following are the words in which he was described by an impartial observer, who had been in long habits of intimacy with him, and who was beginning to understand his character.

“ Pius VI. has defects, and still greater prejudices. Political matters make little impression upon him, because he has, during his whole life, followed the profession of advocate or judge. He is hasty and impetuous in the first moment; but soon grows calm of himself, or in consequence of the reasons which are alleged to him. It is useless to endeavour to make him accede to a project which he is determined to reject; but he willingly adopts a substitute. The great art with him is to flatter, or spare *his vanity*. He is fond of fame, and his heart is naturally humane and generous. It is a pity that his Roman education has a little injured the work of nature; but, with all that, no *popeable* cardinal is his superior.”

Such, with some few restrictions, was the opinion entertained of him by several judicious persons, a short time before the revolution at Rome,

Some principal traits of his character had then, however, escaped the discerning eye of his judges. We have already seen the errors into which he was led by his ungovernable love of splendid undertakings, and by the prodigality which resulted from it. We shall presently see those which originated in his affection for his nephews.

Formerly the pope's nephews had it in their power to enrich themselves by means of the pious tribute which flowed from every part of Europe into their uncle's treasury. But since that source has diminished, it has been only by oppressing their subjects that the popes have been able to indulge the weakness of nepotism; for the legitimate savings of a Roman pontiff are but of little account. Those of Ganganelli, notwithstanding the liberality of some foreign princes and his great economy, did not exceed seventy thousand crowns. We are about to see how Pius VI., who was far less scrupulous than his predecessor, supplied the deficiency of those means which were hitherto considered as legitimate.

His sister had two sons, who bore their father's name, Onesti. Before he sent for them to Rome, he was already busied about their fortune. As long ago as the year 1775 he bought of the duke di Lanti all the estates he possessed

in the environs of Imola for the sum of sixty thousand crowns, and presented them to his young relatives. Neither of them were known; when Romuald, the youngest, came to Rome at the beginning of 1778, and obtained a place in the ecclesiastical academy. His first appearance was very prepossessing. To a countenance at once sweet and expressive, he joined a great deal of candour and much amenity of manners. Pius VI. received him with the tenderness of a father, and lodged him in the apartments which he occupied before he was pope. Young Romuald, who passed two hours every day with his uncle, went out but little, and endeavoured to improve himself. Every body was pleased with him; and it was already foreseen that his preferment would not be neglected. The first favour that Pius VI. granted him was to dispatch him to France, as bearer of the cardinal's hat to Messieurs de Rohan and de la Rochefoucault. He was very anxious that he should be well received in that country, where there was then no cause of complaint against Pius VI. The cardinal de Bernis was of opinion, that the sending of his nephew to Paris could not fail to cement the good understanding that subsisted between the head of the church and its eldest son. He neglected nothing to gain his court's approbation of the pope's choice, and to interest it in favour



of the young prelate. Onesti, who had already assumed his uncle's name, set out for Paris in the month of October.

It was during his stay there that Pius VI. was guilty of one of those head-strong acts, which he was apt to commit when left to his own discretion.

A suffragan of the elector of Treves, of the name of *Honthelm*, had, a few years before, published, under the name of *Febronius*, a book very bold for the time; and in which he recalled to mind the principles of the primitive church, and inveighed bitterly against the usurpations of the court of Rome. The holy see, which was in the habit of thinking religion in danger as often as any attack was made upon its prerogatives, was deeply affected by it. But the time for launching the spiritual thunder was gone by, and it was brooding over its sorrows in silence, when all on a sudden appeared a recantation of the work of Febronius. Pius VI., who could not contain his joy, proposed to celebrate with the greatest splendour this triumph of the Roman church. He was careful, however, not to entrust his project to the cardinal de Bernis, who would undoubtedly have opposed it, and with whom he was always upon the reserve whenever he had any injudicious measure in contemplation. On Christmas eve, after the midnight mass, when he was still panting after his pontifi-

cal fatigues, he got into the pulpit at St. Peter's church, and, in presence of all the cardinals, and of an immense auditory, read the edifying recantation with a stentorophonic voice, and accompanied it with a pretty violent invective against the maxims opposed to those of the Holy See, without recollecting that there were then several governments to which, by so doing, he might give offence. When his first enthusiasm subsided, he felt some compunction; and the severe observations of the cardinal de Bernis awakened his fears. His only punishment, however, was the sarcasms which were cast upon him with a liberal hand, even by the people of Rome.

When the prelate, his nephew, was informed of this ridiculous scene, he could not help blushing at the imprudence of the pope. He was in a country where, in good company particularly, these pious farces were criticised without mercy. A report had been spread, a short time before, that the sovereign pontiff's mind was a little deranged; and to the great mortification of young Romuald, the news of the scene, in which his holiness had been the sole actor, did not fail to accredit the rumour. He returned to Rome in the course of April 1779. The pope at that time was only beginning to recover from a very serious illness; and young count Onesti appeared much shocked at

finding him in so feeble and languishing a state. His affliction was, no doubt, increased by the idea, that the cardinal's hat, which he expected as the reward of his mission, would elude his grasp. Ere long, however, his grief subsided, and his hopes were renewed by his uncle's convalescence. Pius VI. began to re-appear in public; and upon that occasion received from the people marks of affection which he had reason to think sincere, because they were then not altogether undeserved. He repaired on foot to the palace of count Romuald, to see the pictures, the furniture, and the rich tapestry of which he had deprived himself, in order to add to the luxury of his nephew. While admiring these ornaments, he seemed to enjoy the sacrifices they had cost him; and gratitude appeared to the darling nephew a very agreeable tribute to pay. Tears stood in both their eyes; and the scene would have been moving, if it had not unfortunately been exhibited at the expense of the Roman people.

But a single nephew was not enough for the affection of Pius VI. Count Romuald had an elder brother, whose name was count Lewis, and who was as yet unknown. As he was not destined for the church, it was necessary to procure him a rich establishment by some other means. He made his appearance at Rome to-



wards the end of the year. The Roman nobles, and all those whose interest it was to please the pope, loaded his two nephews with attentions, to which the latter were not backward in making a courteous return. It began to be foreseen that they would be a heavy charge to the state.

In the course of 1780, count Romuald was created apostolical prothonotary. This was a dignity purely honorary; but conferred a right of wearing the purple gown, and the title of *monsignore*. In the country of vanity by excellence, nothing more was necessary to render it desirable. But it had still other advantages. Without it there was no possibility of running the career of ambition. The individual, who wished to obtain it, was obliged to prove that he had an income of at least 1500 Roman crowns. It will easily be believed that the pope's nephew had no difficulty in furnishing this proof. Shortly after young Romuald was created *major domo* of the sovereign pontiff, that is to say, high steward of his household. This was one of those places which were called *cardinalitians*, because they led infallibly to a cardinal's hat. Such also were those of the governor of Rome, of the treasurer and auditor of the Apostolical Chamber, of the president of Urbino, the principal nunciatures, &c. In the conferring of these favours there was nothing objection-

able: count Romuald only obtained dignities, which in default of him would have been given to others, and an income which was no burden to the public treasury. Besides, his talents were not of a splendid kind, and his disposition was quiet and unassuming. As he bore his faculties meekly, the favour he enjoyed was forgiven him. But how is it possible to forgive the pope the prodigality and excessive avidity which he afterwards indulged, in order to heap riches upon count Romuald and his brother?

The latter in particular, who, on his arrival from his own country, scarcely possessed five hundred Roman crowns, soon equalled in opulence the richest families of Rome, and took advantage of his uncle's weakness in order to collect presents from all quarters, and to enter into speculations which betrayed the most shameful avarice. His marriage with donna Constanza, the daughter of that madame Falconieri, who was said to be his uncle's mistress, was celebrated in the course of the year 1781. Pius VI. gave them the nuptial benediction with great parade in the Sixtine chapel; pronounced upon the occasion one of those flowery discourses of which he was not sparing, and to which his talents were not ill adapted; sent to his nephew's house a casket containing ten thousand gold doubloons; and gave both to

him and his bride a golden rosary set with diamonds, and a series of medals enriched with precious stones, &c. This was not enough. His nephew's match being greater in point of family than fortune, it gave occasion to a donation which excited many complaints. The estates that the Jesuits possessed at Tivoli had been confiscated in favour of the Apostolical Chamber; and one hundred and thirty thousand crowns had been offered for them by the prince of Santa Croce, and the marquis Bandini. The preceding year they had produced oil to the amount of twelve thousand crowns. The Apostolical Chamber parted with them to count Onesti for sixty five thousand, and allowed him sixty-five years to pay that sum. An acquisition so scandalously illegal could not prosper; and nobody would pity duke Braschi on account of the poverty to which he is reduced, if he had experienced no other losses. It was shortly after that he bought the estate of Nemi, which lies contiguous to his possessions at Tivoli, and of which he took the name. His marriage procured him donations of a less exceptionable kind. The kings of France and Spain sent presents to the new married couple; and they received others from the cardinals, the Roman princes, the nobility, the prelates, the bishops, the farmers of the Apostolical Chamber, and



from the solicitors of favours of every class. The presents were assembled in a great hall, where the vanity of Pius VI. was gratified by a sight of them.

He neglected no means of laying liberality under contribution in favour of his nephews, particularly of that darling couple whom malignity took a pleasure in considering as his daughter and as his son-in-law. One of the customs of the court of Rome was to send consecrated baby-linen to the children of the principal catholic sovereigns. Of what circumstance in life did not superstition avail itself in order to extend its empire? Towards the end of the year 1781 Louis XVI. had a son born, and the prince of Asturias an Infant. Pius VI. entrusted to his niece the care of procuring the dresses that he was to send to the new-born princes. Countess Braschi accordingly set about making such purchases as might do honour to her taste, and to her uncle's munificence. She was in hopes that this refinement of attention would not be thrown away; and she already smiled at the prospect of the presents she was about to receive in return. Pius VI. made the same calculation; and they were not disappointed.

Shortly after, favours, pensions, and honours of all kind were showered down upon the heads of this fortunate couple. In 1785 the king of

Sardinia gave count Braschi a commandery worth more than two thousand crowns a year; created him at the same time a commander of his order of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus, and sent him the great cross enriched with diamonds.

In the following year, the promotion of his brother to the cardinalate afforded Roman magnificence a new opportunity of displaying itself. It was a regular custom for the cardinals, at the time of their appointment, to make presents to the sovereign pontiff. If the disinterestedness of Ganganelli was unable to abolish this custom, he at least received nothing but articles calculated to enrich his museum. But Pius VI. had a particular affection for presents of intrinsic value; and his example was strictly followed by his nephews, who shared in the liberality of the new cardinals. Cardinal Braschi, already enriched by their gifts, was rendered still more opulent by those of the courtiers, who vied with each other in this mode of celebrating his promotion. The principal Roman families sent him presents very little analogous to his dignity, or even to his uncle's museum. He received from them magnificent carriages with sets of six horses, beautiful services of china, gold boxes, watches set with diamonds, saddle-horses richly caparisoned, and even bank notes very handsomely affixed to cakes of chocolate. The

whole amount of these presents was estimated at a hundred thousand Roman crowns.

All this, however, was no more than proofs of *passive* avarice; and cardinal Braschi might say with Célimène:

Puis-je empêcher les gens de me trouver aimable \*?

But he gave that same year a proof of *active* avarice, not quite so easily excused. A certain prior, of the name of *Anterani*, who possessed an immense and very valuable personal property, left him in his will an undeterminate legacy. He authorised him to select from his property, before any of it was brought to sale, whatever furniture, plate, jewels, and other valuables he might fancy. The cardinal-nephew was not backward in availing himself of this permission, which afforded him so fine an opportunity of furnishing his palace at a small expense. It was in the priory of this singular testator that the pope had built a charming habitation; where the most refined taste disputed the palm with magnificence. Hence it appears, that, with all the semblance of piety and apostolical zeal, Pius VI. was not so exclusively occupied with the interests of heaven, as not to relish the enjoyment of terrestrial vanities; and his nephews, who had

\* If people think me amiable, how can I help it?



more leisure, and were under less restraint, were still less scrupulous. But if these various ways of acquiring treasures, and enjoying life, were any way shameful, they were at least nowise criminal. The same could not be said of what remains to be related of their insatiable avidity.

Would any one believe that about this time duke Braschi bought up all the oil in the ecclesiastical state, without regard to the law, which forbade any individual to monopolise an article of the first necessity? The president of *la Grascia*, within whose department it came, was obliged to purchase it of him again, and to raise the price ten per cent. at the expense of the consumer. Would any one believe that at the same time he monopolised corn also, by procuring it at a low price of the country people, and then obtaining an exclusive permission to export it? The weakness of Pius VI. overlooked all these disorders; but they were grievances which the Romans did not forgive him; and when about this time he appeared in public, he was more than once greeted with hisses in return for his benedictions.

But a trait of rapacity still more shameful, a scandalous proof of his blind affection for his nephews, raised indignation to the utmost height. This trait deserves to be given in detail.

There was at Rome in 1783, one Amanzio

Lepri, the last male descendant of a Milanese, who had enriched himself in collecting the customs of the ecclesiastical state. He had taken priest's orders, and joined to a weak mind what most commonly accompanies it, a tender conscience. His immense fortune, no doubt, excited some remorse. He thought he should sanctify it; he thought he should do a thing highly agreeable to God by adding to the opulence of his vicar and his family. He waited upon the sovereign pontiff, and presented him with a formal donation of all his patrimony in favour of the beloved nephews of his holiness. Pius VI. was affected by this unexpected generosity, and, quieting his scruples, accepted it with tears in his eyes (he wept without difficulty), lavishing upon the donor the treasure of his benedictions. The worthy Amanzio-Lepri had modestly reserved himself, out of his great fortune, a pension of five hundred crowns a year. Pius VI. was resolved not to be outdone in generosity; and insisted upon that sum being paid him every month. Did the Holy Ghost reveal to him that those payments would soon be at an end?

Amanzio, however, had a young niece of the name of Mary-Anne, who was his ward. His pious liberality had edified only the pontiff and his nephews; and the youthful Mary-Anne soon

sound defenders. Many distinguished Romans, and even cardinal John Francis Albani, the dean of the Sacred College, espoused her cause. It was at first without success. Her mother, the marchioness Victoria Lepri, had courage enough to commence a suit against the pope, arraigning her silly relative's donation before the auditor of the Apostolical Chamber. This is a place which attaches him who occupies it to the person of the holy father; which renders him the organ of his justice; and which leads to the cardinalate. The auditor rejected the plea of Victoria Lepri; and a cardinal's hat was soon after the reward of his base complaisance.

But the Lepri family were not discouraged. They appealed to the tribunal of the *Rota*, which, amidst general corruption, was still renowned for its inflexible equity. Among the many councils, congregations, and tribunals of Rome, this was, perhaps, the only establishment which had preserved all its claims to the public esteem unimpaired. The decisions had, in some sort, the force of law out of the ecclesiastical state. There was no appeal from them, unless a demand of revision; which was presented to the *Rota* itself; and which it was free to admit or reject. A greater homage could not well be paid to the integrity of a tribunal. That of the *Rota* was composed of twelve judges, who were called



auditors. Three were Romans, one a native of Bologna, one of Ferrara, one a Venetian; one a Milanese, one German, one Frenchman, and two Spaniards. The five first were paid by the pope; and each of the others by the state to which he belonged. Upon a vacancy happening, the sovereign who was to furnish an auditor presented three or four candidates, out of whom the pope selected one; but his choice generally fell upon the first on the list. The reporter of each cause was one of these twelve auditors of the *Rota*; but had no vote. The cause, after being pleaded by advocates, was first submitted to the judgment of four auditors. It was decided, if three of them were of the same opinion. If there were an equal division, it was discussed anew, but before six auditors. In case of there not being an absolute plurality of voices in this second trial, the cause was brought before the whole tribunal; and then only the reporter voted, if it was necessary for him to do so, in order to divide the suffrages.

Such was the organisation of the tribunal of the *Rota*. Thus composed, most of its members were placed in a sort of independence; which is the best guarantee of the integrity of judges. It is true that the auditors of the *Rota*, who were all prelates, had, even when foreigners, favours to expect from the court of Rome; but they

were chosen with care, and seldom deviated from their duty. Their very ambition was interested in their rigid adherence to the laws of probity. When we have constant claims to esteem, we soon also acquire claims to favour. Besides, they could hardly avoid combining information with purity of intention. They were obliged to assign reasons for their opinion, and consequently to study the laws. Shame would have been the slightest expiation of their ignorance. The form of their sentences was simple, and left little hold to chicane; and every thing concurred to make them at once respected and feared. Accordingly, an Englishman, in other points very little of an enthusiast, who observed them narrowly during the period we are speaking of, thus terminates their panegyric: "Yes, glorious preservers of the ancient Roman jurisprudence, it is with heart-felt satisfaction that I record this public testimony of my esteem and veneration."

It was before this tribunal, dreaded by the Holy See itself, that the cause of the young Mary-Anne Lepri was brought by appeal. Of the four first judges who had to pronounce sentence, three acknowledged the justice of her claims. They had, however, a moment of weakness. Seduced by the pope, they called in two other judges to investigate a cause already le-

gally decided, in order to give the holy father time to bring about an accommodation. By dint of chicane, it was possible to prove that Amanzio had a right to dispose of his inheritance. His grandfather had established a trust of about a million of crowns in favour of Joseph, one of his sons, father of the young lady, with remainder to his heirs male; and in default of such issue, the trust was to revert to his second son John, with the same limitations; and lastly, in case of John dying without male issue, to his third son Amanzio; *still excluding females, as long as the male branch should exist.* It was upon this clause that Pius VI. endeavoured to ground the legality of the donation. But that did not render the spoliation of the ward either the less manifest or the less odious. He was sensible then of the weakness of his plea, and proposed a compromise to the marchioness di Lepri. He offered to pay down two hundred thousand crowns. The marchioness made answer, that even for three hundred thousand she would not suffer her daughter to be deprived of her inheritance. Another expedient was thought of: that was, to marry the young lady to the *major-domo* Onesti, one of the pope's nephews, who was not yet a cardinal. But the legal proceedings went on faster than the negotiation; and, in spite of all intrigues, the *Rota* unanimously pronounced sentence, in



the second instance, in favour of Mary-Anne. This happened on the 2d of June, 1785. The common people, who have every-where, even at Rome, an innate sentiment of what is just and honest, assembled before the hall of the *Rota*, and to the great chagrin of the holy father, celebrated the triumph of justice by their noisy acclamations.

An incident still more unlucky occurred soon after. Amanzio Lepri died. Count Braschi immediately had the will, that was favourable to his views, read and sealed; but how great was his mortification when the youthful Mary-Anne produced a more recent one, which her uncle had secretly made, and in which he secured to her his fortune, by annulling the donation, made by him in his life-time, to the pope and his nephews, as having been *extorted* by intrigue. A strange embarrassment for the papal family! But powerful men have always the means of setting themselves above the laws. In vain did the public voice exclaim against Pius VI., and in vain did the family of the deceased claim the execution of the sentence of the *Rota*. The pope refused; and did it in that tone of ill-humour and harshness which authority is so apt to assume when it feels itself in the wrong. He seduced the civilians; obtained a revision of the suit; and even found means to shake the integrity of the

the *Rota*. Several members, more courageous than the rest, persisted in their first opinion. The estimable Acevedo, one of the two auditors of the *Rota* furnished by Spain, while his colleague d'Espuig, afterwards archbishop of Seville, was basely flattering the avarice of the pontiff, nobly supported the cause of the adverse party; and said, that to strip her of her inheritance would be to commit a shameful crime. His opposition was useless. In the course of 1786 the definitive decree was carried to Pius VI. upon a golden plate. It confirmed the donation of the imbecile Amanzio; and condemned to costs of suit the lawful heirs, who were thus reduced to misery and despair.

At this news the public indignation knew no bounds. The pope only suspected it. He was surrounded by flatterers, or weak friends, who feared the debasement of the Holy See, and endeavoured to palliate the iniquity of the pontiff. Pius VI., to excuse himself, said, with apparent frankness, that he wished for nothing but the triumph of justice; but that when that triumph should be once secured, the Lepri family might depend upon his generosity. Foreigners, on the other hand, did not spare him. The court of Tuscany was then engaged in a quarrel with the pope, and rejoiced at the means which he himself employed to diminish his popularity. The

news-writer of Florence accompanied his account of the suit, and of its result, with the most cutting reflections, and was not disavowed by his government.

The pope, however, met with more formidable antagonists. The family of Altieri, one of the most considerable in Rome, espoused with warmth the cause of the youthful Mary-Anne. The prince of that name even married her a short time after. The pope was obliged to yield; and the parties came to an accommodation in 1787; by virtue of which the duke of Braschi was to keep all the personals of the rich inheritance, and to continue to enjoy the income of all the real estates for six years.

Would any one believe, however, that avidity, repenting of the sacrifices extorted from her by some little remains of shame, recurred to new chicanes, in order to re-commence the suit. The *Rota* sullied its reputation of integrity, by lending its agency to this iniquitous transaction. At length in 1789, arbitrators, appointed on both sides, mediated a new accommodation, still more advantageous to nepotism. The whole inheritance was divided into equal shares between the pope's nephews and the real heiress. But the portion of one of the parties was enhanced by the addition of remorse and shame. When we remember this infamous affair, we



cannot feel much disposed to pity the nephews of his holiness, so rich a year ago, and at present so wretched ; nor can we help believing the truth of the old proverb, which fixes the fate of *ill-gotten wealth*. When the apologists of Pius VI. wish to save the glory of his pontificate, by quoting the restoration of the Appian way, the draining of the Pontine marshes, and the protection he gave to the arts, the way to shut their mouths is to remind them of the Lepri inheritance.

It is certainly the transaction which reflects the greatest dishonour on his reign. But Pius VI. may also be reproached with other instances of avidity, which are equally shameful, though not equally notorious. Has he not been known to avail himself of the most base expedients to enrich his nephews, and draw treasure from the most polluted sources. That celebrated English woman, who by turns diverted Europe by her extravagance, and shocked it by her profligacy ; that woman, who carried about the scandal of bigamy from state to state ; the duchess of Kingston, in a word, bequeathed to him at her death a picture set round with diamonds. The legacy was valuable. It was worth forty thousand florins. It was supposed that the delicacy of Pius VI. would reject this bequest ; but he did not offer such an affront to the *manes* of the

illustrious *aventurière*. Nor did he always content himself with accepting in the most unblushing manner: he sometimes grasped at the property of others without a claim, an apparent one at least, and without feeling any remorse of conscience. At the time of the destruction of the Jesuits, all the plate belonging to those of Rome had been seized, and deposited at *Monte di Pietà*. Pius VI. had it brought to him; converted part of it into chandeliers for his favourite abbey at Subiaco; and kept the rest for his own use, or for the caprices of his liberality. The Ex-jesuits were very much exasperated at this conduct. They alleged that, even after their suppression, they ought at least to retain their moveable property. They had, as it is well known, a very numerous and very formidable party at Rome. In order to appease them, Pius VI. was obliged to shew them some favour; and consequently gave occasion to new suspicions and new complaints on the part of the catholic powers. It often happens that a single prominent defect leads to very serious faults, and to misfortunes that are not always occasioned even by the most odious vices. The vanity of Pius VI. accounts for almost all his errors, and was the most abundant source of his calamities. He was rapacious, because he was determined to have, at any price, the means of rendering his

pontificate brilliant, and of immortalising his name. Hence that oppression, and those immoderate issues of paper money, which, by exciting the discontent of his subjects, facilitated at least, if it did not immediately occasion, his fall.



## CHAPTER X.

*Causes of the Overthrow of the Roman Government.*

THE grievances, then, of which the Roman people complained, were but too well founded, and in another country they might have had the most serious consequences. But with such subjects as the Romans, the danger of an insurrection might appear to be remote. Still, more patient than their ancestors in the days of their degeneracy, they could even go without *bread*, provided they were amused with *shows*; and in this respect, modern Rome was still better treated than the Rome of antiquity. What a variety, what a multitude of diversions it afforded to ignorance, frivolity, and sloth! Every day produced a repetition of what passed once in the square of St. Mark at Venice, when a missionary, jealous of the success of the master of a puppet-show, found no other means of calling off the numerous auditory of his rival, than by taking a crucifix from under his cassock, and shaking it in the air, crying out: *Eccolo, eccolo, il vero pollicinello* \*! At Rome there was a constant struggle

\* Look here, look here, here's the real punch for you!

between the profane theatres and the churches. The priests were everlastingly in dispute with the mountebanks. The only difference between them is that which exists between dull and entertaining absurdity. Here, a juggler astonished the multitude by his pretended prodigies: there, the crowd was dazzled by the illusions of superstition. Their wondering eyes were now directed to the tricks of a conjuror; now to a Madonna, whom a fanatic monk ordered to weep: and while men of refined taste paid for and relished the songs of Metastasio, and the melodious accents of Paesello, the mob went *gratis* to the opera at St. Peter's church. There was not a single day for *ennui*; not a moment for mischievous idleness.

And then the union of two powers, in a single hand, was wonderfully calculated to render the abuses of authority supportable. The Romans, superstitious in their nature, saw in their sovereign a double individual; by turns, ridiculous and sacred, odious and respectable. One day they cursed the prodigal, rapacious, and presumptuous prince; the next they threw themselves prostrate before the vicar of Jesus Christ; a procession or a solemn benediction sufficing to make them forget the dearth of provisions. Their vanity was flattered with the idea of having within their walls the source of spiritual

grace, the object of the homage of the whole catholic universe. They were dazzled with the pomp, at once religious and profane, which environed the pontiff; and each of them thought that he partook of his splendor.

This government, vicious as it was, flattered in many respects the passions of the multitude. In that immense hierarchy, which from the most obscure sacristan arose to the pope, they did not see a single rank that they might not attain; and though there were in Rome certain great families for whom the pope was in a manner obliged to reserve a few cardinals' hats, there was not a single subject of the whole ecclesiastical state who might not aspire to the first dignities of the church, and hope to raise his family to an honourable state. What was the origin of most of the cardinals? To say nothing of the famous shepherd of Montalto, who, in the last century, had been seen to rise successively from the lowest condition to the pontifical throne. Was not Ganganelli of the most obscure extraction? And what was Braschi himself? A private gentleman of a distant province.

There was in the Roman government, then, two circumstances which seemed, notwithstanding so many causes of destruction, likely to ensure its duration; two circumstances which have so much influence upon mankind; vanity, and su-



perstition in its most dazzling pomp. The imagination of the vulgar represented it as something supernatural; and their pride thence derived more than one kind of enjoyment. In the ecclesiastical state, thanks to the climate, the natural wants are few, and are easily satisfied. In the capital there was so much food for curiosity, so many resources for idleness, and so few rallying points for the discontented, that an insurrection, organised in a dangerous manner, was next to impossible. Rome was, properly speaking, the metropolis of Europe, the city of artists, amateurs, and foreigners. It would have been in vain to look there for the city of the Romans. Out of its whole population of about a hundred and sixty thousand souls, there were scarcely any natives, except the Transteverines, and the inhabitants of the quarter *dei Monti*; and they were precisely the most rude and the most superstitious part of the populace. Among them, perhaps, might have been found the materials of a revolution: but who, among the other inhabitants of Rome, was interested in bringing one about? Was it the artists, who are naturally the friends of peace? The foreigners who came to Rome in search of information or pleasure? The numerous ecclesiastics of every rank, who had all their career of ambition to run? The prelates, who might become cardinals? Or the cardinals,

each of whom looked to the possibility of his attaining the papacy, and all of whom enjoyed a degree of consideration that any revolution might have endangered? Every interest then concurred, if not to inspire a love, at least to counsel an endurance, of an order of things in which the existence of all was implicated. It may also be said, that the reign of a Roman pontiff, whatever he might be, must have appeared tolerable on other accounts. It was generally of short duration, and consequently left a door always open to hope. Men are naturally inclined to be patient, when they are every day upon the eve of a change exempt from convulsion. Besides, the reign of the popes was seldom signalised by scandalous disorders, or by intolerable acts of oppression. Their age, the life they must naturally have led before they rose to supreme power, their habit of throwing a veil over their excesses, whenever they indulged in any; every thing, in short, contributed to divert them from those acts of violence which irritate a whole nation, and produce an unanimous outcry of indignation: and Pius VI., notwithstanding his defects, was not an exception to the general rule. He has given occasion, no doubt, to bitter complaints; but he is not reproached with those acts of despotism which engender rebellions, especially among a people little energetic, and occupied

with its pious mummeries, and with its amusements. He found the government accustomed to mild measures; and he did not render it more severe. The agents of that government were often untrue to their trusts; but in their manners there was nothing repulsive. The nation certainly was not in a state of prosperity: it was wasting away in a deep decline; but it was a stranger to the pangs of acute disorders. It cannot be denied that justice was administered with partiality; but its dispensations were never severe. The laws were bad, or fallen into contempt; but they were not rigorous. The finances were in the greatest disorder. The taxes, by which the people almost always estimate their felicity, were comparatively light. Accordingly, a few years before the French revolution, at the time when the palpable errors of pope Braschi's reign began to strike every eye, his subjects used to say to travellers, even in the most remote provinces of the ecclesiastical state, in those that were the most distant from that splendor which dazzles the multitude, and makes them forget their misfortunes: "Yes, the mildness of our government makes us love it, defective as it is, and ridiculous as it may appear; and we should dread the consequences of a change. If we had a secular government, agriculture and the arts, perhaps,



“ would flourish more ; but we should have  
 “ burdensome taxes ; we should be a prey to  
 “ extortion. Only see how the people in the  
 “ duchies of Modena and Parma are oppressed !  
 “ No : none but the enemies of the public wel-  
 “ fare can desire a change ; for nowhere is there  
 “ greater comfort. We are, it is true, subject  
 “ to the caprices of a government which often  
 “ changes ; which is without any fixed plan as  
 “ to the exportation of commodities ; and  
 “ which sometimes favours and sometimes  
 “ fetters it. But where is the administration  
 “ without its defects ? Where are the agents  
 “ who may not be reproached with some abuse  
 “ of power \* ? ”

Elsewhere, judges less indulgent, blamed the  
 administration of Pius VI. ; but still spoke hand-  
 somely of the Roman government. The pre-  
 sent pope, said they, has carried the abuse, to  
 which the people is most sensible, to greater  
 lengths than his predecessors. The monopoly  
 of corn, of oil, and of meat, is become more  
 grievous than ever. We experience dearths,  
 and sometimes a real scarcity ; but at least we  
 have no wars, of which we are bound to bear  
 the burden : nor have we any occasion for ex-

\* See Roland, *Lettres écrites de Suisse et d'Italie*, tom. v.  
 p. 515.

traordinary expenses. The pope is covetous, it is true; but he does not hoard up his money; neither has he any interest in countenancing acts of oppression. Our laws are not sufficiently coercive; and our tribunals are neither severe, nor even vigilant. Hence results a very bad police, and the impunity of crimes. But what inconveniences do we suffer that are not fully compensated by the happiness of never having threats or violence hanging over our heads?

We do not pretend to prove by this that the Roman government was entirely contrary to the maxims of sound philosophy, or even to the dictates of reason alone. We only mean to say, that, if it had within it the elements of a slow, but inevitable destruction, it did not as yet excite, even under the reign of Pius VI., that violent discontent which provokes the people to a revolution.

It is then elsewhere, it is without that we must look for the principal causes of it; and we shall find them much less in the endeavours of heretics, poets, and atheists, to undermine the pontifical throne, than in the conduct of the catholic powers in regard to the Holy See. Dupaty, in his letters concerning Italy, in which we meet with so many truths, expressed with so much ingenuity, that at first sight they wear the appearance of paradoxes: Dupaty says,

“ the ecclesiastical state was never so stable, as  
“ since it is so weak. Henceforth it has no-  
“ thing to fear; for henceforth it is no longer  
“ to be feared.”—It wished to become powerful  
again; and did not know how to accommodate  
itself to circumstances. It endeavoured to make  
a shew of strength, and it fell to the ground.

This will be more fully explained in the fol-  
lowing chapters.



## CHAPTER XI.

*Disputes of the Holy See with the Court of Vienna.*

AS long as Maria Theresa lived, the court of Vienna preserved an appearance of regard and respect for the Holy See. That princess, so great in several points of view, had, especially towards the latter end of her life, contracted her mind in the swaddling-clothes of devotion. She had long considered the Jesuits as the principal support of religion. Other courts, the rivals of her's in impiety, had heavy causes of complaint against them, and solicited their destruction. Maria Theresa thought she made a great effort in not opposing it; and died, perhaps, regretting the society of Jesus.

The throne, which she left vacant, was then occupied by an enterprising prince, fertile in projects of reform. Joseph II., in spite of whatever ill-humour and envy may have said, was a man of sense and information, who wanted nothing but moderation and prudence to qualify him for the execution of great designs. He had long meditated under the guardianship of an imperious mother, far less philosophical than himself,

vast plans, the execution of which his impatience impelled him to hasten. Because he had long resolved them in his mind, he thought he had matured them; or, rather judging the rest of Europe, and his subjects, by himself, he thought that every thing was ripe for his projects.

Scarcely had he begun his reign, when the respect of the court of Vienna for the Holy See perceptibly diminished, as had been foreseen. It is true that Pius VI. was so ill-advised to provoke this sudden change. His greatest embarrassment was to reconcile the different marks of attention which he wished to shew to the great powers, when they had opposite views. It was often impossible for him to yield to the demands of one, without displeasing the rest. He then had recourse to those *mezzo-termini*, which seldom fail to excite as much discontent in him to whom we yield, as in him whom we resist. He had found himself in this unpleasant dilemma towards the end of the reign of Maria Theresa.

Pious as she was, that princess carried all the weaknesses of maternal vanity to the highest pitch; and to gratify them, even her religious scruples were for some time laid aside. The archduke Maximilian, one of her sons, had embraced the ecclesiastical profession. It was not

enough for her to have secured to him the electorate of Cologne; she wished also to add to it the bishopric of Munster, and several others. If the empress-queen had been left to herself, the house of Austria would in time have invaded all the rich prelatures in Germany, one after the other. The two courts of Versailles and Madrid took umbrage at it; and the king of Prussia expressed his displeasure. He even held out threats to the canons of Munster. But it was at Rome, that under a pontiff less easily intimidated, and, above all, less easily seduced, that the evil might have been crushed at its birth. France and Spain urged Pius VI. to refuse the archduke the briefs of eligibility. They wished him to oppose to the demands of the court of Vienna the holy canons, which forbade the plurality of benefices. It was thus that those great powers, which gave such frequent shocks to the authority of the Holy See, invoked it when it tended to favour their views. Pius VI. was in the greatest perplexity. He did not dare too openly to thwart the court of Vienna. Why did not the other courts, which were able to contend with equal arms, undertake the troublesome task? At the bottom of his heart he was not sorry to see the great powers engaged in a dispute. He was sensible, that if it be true, that the little have suffered by the follies of the great,



it is not less true that the weak profit by their quarrels. But the weak do not always know how to avail themselves of the advantages afforded them by circumstances. The pope, wishing at once to keep well both with the house of Bourbon and the house of Austria, gave cause of complaint to one, without securing the gratitude of the other.

The latter received from him at first a proof of condescension. He began by granting a dispensation to the archduke Maximilian, to enable him to take holy orders before he accepted the co-adjutorship of the archbishopric of Cologne, and of the bishopric of Munster. He had, however, courage enough to annex a condition to this favour. It was, that the archduke should be applied for as co-adjutor by the elector himself; and that he should procure himself a majority of votes in the two chapters; a vain formality, which the cabinet of Vienna was sure to fulfil with ease. This act of apparent firmness did not prevent the cabinets of Versailles and Madrid from being much displeased with his complaisance; but the former, where the queen was all-powerful, was silent. The minister of Spain spoke with that energy which was consistent with his character, and conformable to his instructions. Pius VI., who feared him, hesitated for some time; but the court of Vienna

lavished compliments upon the pontiff, and presents upon his nephews and all the papal ministry, without even forgetting the lowest officers in the chancery. The court of Vienna gained the day.

These were the last friendly transactions between it and the Holy See. The death of Maria Theresa followed close after this little triumph; and from that moment it was foreseen that the time of conciliatory measures was past. Pius VI. was sensible of this. He was acquainted with the character and principles of Joseph II.; and he appeared to make it his business to accelerate the moment of rigour. This is one example of that inconsistency which often appeared during his pontificate.

It was a custom established at Rome, that the pope should pay funeral honours in his chapel to the catholic sovereigns who were lately dead. Is it credible that Pius VI. refused this vain homage to the memory of Maria Theresa? He had just derogated from the holy canons in favour of that princess; and yet he would not derogate, on her account, from a usage of no consequence in itself, and equally unconnected with divine worship, and with the discipline of the church. He persisted in maintaining that such honours were never paid to queens: he affected to be ignorant that Maria Theresa, who had

reigned twenty years alone, ought to be assimilated to other sovereigns. Besides, of what consequence was this derogation from custom, compared with the giving of offence to a prince whose favour it was so much his interest to conciliate!

Joseph II. had, in his turn, the weakness to be offended at this paltry shift; while Pius VI., deceiving all the calculations of those who thought they knew him, and rejecting the prudent counsels of his real friends, piqued himself upon braving the resentment of the emperor. When cardinal Herzan, the Imperial minister, endeavoured to point out to him the inconveniences that might result from his incivility—*Well!* replied the pope in a passion, *I do not care whether the emperor be angry with this business, or whether he hold it in contempt.* Joseph II. adopted the former part of the alternative; and when he signed a dispatch, addressed by his chancery to the Imperial minister at the papal court, he added in his own hand-writing: *It is of little consequence to me whether the bishop of Rome be polite or uncivil;* and he thought himself completely revenged.

But this was not the only affront which he reserved for the pope. The plan of Joseph II. was, no doubt, formed, when he ascended the throne of Maria Theresa; and, in all probabi-



lity, no change would have been effected in it by a funeral oration delivered by the pope. But the very trifling incident of its omission had an immediate influence upon the manner of putting it into execution; and it was observed, that the emperor, while acting upon his great philosophical principles, enjoyed the uneasiness that he was about to give to the sovereign pontiff.

As early as the beginning of the year 1781, he spoke of introducing the maxims of the Gallican church into his dominions, of abolishing the plurality of benefices, and of granting greater liberty to the press. He ordered a statement to be drawn up of all the ecclesiastical revenues of the Milanese, and of the state of Mantua. This was bringing the subject of alarm close home to the Holy See. Joseph II. intermingled some traits of puerile animosity with the notification of these dreadful measures. He was in hopes of vexing Pius VI. by taking a confessor from among the Ex-jesuits. He was not then as yet acquainted with his secret sentiments.

Soon after, he proceeded from words and preliminary measures to very serious reforms. In that very year he issued two edicts, subjecting to very troublesome rules the admission of briefs, bulls, and rescripts, of the court of Rome. By another, he declared that in future the monastic orders should not be exempt from the authority

of the bishops; and that the pope should no longer have immediate jurisdiction over them. Pius VI. had at first sufficient self-command to repress the anger he felt at these innovations. He wished, he said, to confine himself to paternal representations. But he received, from all quarters, complaints to which it was necessary to attend. Rules of conduct were requested of him; and he thought he could not do otherwise than give them, when in fact he stood in need of them himself. A panic seized upon the whole ecclesiastical army; and ran from rank to rank to the commander in chief. The monks trembled in their cells. Their provincials consulted the generals of orders who resided at Rome. The latter addressed themselves to the pope. They agreed with him that it was necessary to make head against the storm; and, in pursuance of his advice, wrote thus to the subordinate chiefs: *Be mindful of the constitutions of your order, and of your duty.* The armies were in presence of each other: the war was about to begin, without being declared.

Joseph II. continued his reforms. He reduced the fees of christenings and burials to one half. Pius VI. resolved to try the effect of his paternal remonstrances. The emperor answered drily to his nuncio: *I want no advice concerning the affairs of my own dominions, which regard only my own sub-*

jects, nor concerning matters which are merely of a temporal nature.

All that Joseph II. has since said, all that he has since done relative to reforms in the discipline of the church, has been merely a commentary upon, or an application of, this phrase. We shall indicate only the principal ones: all the rest, with their tedious details, should be abandoned to theologians and canonists.

The Jesuits, the constant, zealous, and artful supporters of the Holy See, which had good reason to regret them, had inserted in the ritual the principal clauses of the two famous bulls, *In cœna Domini* and *Unigenitus*. This was a mean of keeping the eyes of the faithful constantly fixed upon the prerogatives of the court of Rome, of holding them up as essential parts of divine worship, and of obtaining from pious sovereigns a kind of tacit acknowledgment of its pretensions. Joseph II. expunged these dangerous interpolations from all the rituals in his dominions.

He declared all the seminaries, and colleges of the missionaries, independent of the court of Rome.

These were only distant attacks made upon his authority. They were followed by a more serious one, which was calculated to have an immediate effect; and upon which it was ne-



cessary to come to some resolution without delay. The emperor wrote to Pius VI. to request an indult, authorising him to present to all the bishoprics, and to sell the benefices of Lombardy. The embarrassment of the pope was great. Was it best to adopt vigorous measures, at the risk of provoking a schism? Or was it wiser to dissemble? That would be to dishonour his pontificate, and to draw upon himself the reproaches of the whole catholic church. Already did the priests about his person blame his supineness, and endeavour to inflame his zeal. He was tempted to suspend the drawing up of all bulls for the hereditary dominions of the emperor; but some persons, who were better advised, observed to him, that Joseph II. was a man capable of dispensing with any thing that was not granted with a good grace. Complain in secret, said they, at the foot of the crucifix, of the pretensions which the emperor sets up. Take what are called conservatory measures; but have a care how you proceed to refusals. Have you forgot the famous expression of Benedict XIV., your first protector, who said, when speaking of temporal sovereigns, *Do not let us discourage their making applications to us.*

But it was hard, it was disgraceful, to yield without resistance. Well, let us resist then, said Pius VI., but with the arms of mildness and of

Christian charity. He replied then to the demand of an indult, by a respectful letter, in which he endeavoured to soften Joseph II. by flattering his vanity. I know very well, said he, that I shall obtain nothing; but it is always important to gain time.

The pope might be considered at that time as an object of pity. Almost all the sovereigns of Europe seemed to have conspired to torment him. France was almost the only one that gave him no cause of complaint, which added still more to the ascendancy of the cardinal de Bernis, and gave him an opportunity of speaking, at least with some transient success, the language which was most familiar to him, that of conciliation and peace. He employed it in order to soothe the pontiff's extreme irritation at the Imperial decree, which forbade any one to apply for dispensations to the court of Rome; and at another decree that appeared shortly after, obliging all the bishops in the hereditary dominions to promise that they would obey every order which had already been issued by the emperor, or *which he might issue hereafter*. This decree was not unlike that of the Spanish inquisition, which proscribed *all* the works of Voltaire, as well those which he had already composed, as *those which he might compose in future*. It may easily be conceived that such an injunction must

appear at once scandalous and alarming to the Holy See, and to all its partisans. But what was to be done? Was it by resignation, or by resistance, that the Roman catholic church could be saved from the calamities by which it was threatened? Pius VI. waited with extreme anxiety for the answer of Joseph II., relative to the indult. What cardinal Herzan said to him before-hand, augured no good: "If your holiness does not grant what the emperor asks, you may be assured that he will present to all the benefices in Lombardy without your consent." Joseph's answer arrived shortly after. It was affectionate, but energetic, and did not leave room for the smallest hope of a compromise. He was sincerely desirous of the holy father's consent; but he did not think it at all necessary. His determination was irrevocable. He was resolved to re-establish the sovereign authority, which the weakness of his predecessors had suffered to be infringed.

The pontiff grieved; deliberated; and was about to submit. Hitherto he had shewn himself fiery in the extreme. His best friends no longer knew him: his phlegm and patience appeared to them supernatural. They found him disposed to grant the fatal indult, provided Joseph would promise to make no farther innovations.



Pius VI. was not yet acquainted with the emperor. He had seen him develop only a part of his vast plan. While he thought himself at the end of his sorrows and sacrifices, a new Imperial decree appeared, suppressing all the monasteries, of which the monks, being merely contemplative, were neither useful as instructors of youth, as missionaries, nor as preachers. It also threw open all the convents of nuns, except those who were engaged in the useful work of education.

These were no small triumphs to sound philosophy. They were thunder-bolts to the court of Rome. They provoked a resolution which was not expected in France, and which took the cardinal de Bernis himself unprovided.

Pius VI. imagined, that if there were any means of converting the emperor, it was to go and visit him in person at Vienna. The only persons to whom he had intrusted the secret of this strange project, were John Francis Albani, dean of the Sacred College, a man of abilities and influence, to whom it was necessary to shew some deference, cardinal Gerdyl, the pope's privy counsellor in every thing relative to theology, and cardinal Pallavicini, on whom he bestowed neither confidence nor friendship; but who, as secretary of state, naturally had a right to be intrusted with the project.

It was the court of Vienna which sent the

first advice of it to that of Versailles. The latter thought the idea extravagant, and calculated to bring the catholic religion and the head of the church into contempt. As to the cardinal de Bernis, he obstinately refused to believe it; and the measure was already announced at Vienna, when cardinal Conti, secretary of briefs, told the ministers of France and Spain that he intended to ask the pope's permission to communicate to them *a very great piece of news*. Bernis and the chevalier Azara knew not for some time what to conjecture. Of all the projects which the pope could have conceived, that of a journey to Vienna appeared the least probable. Their surprise was extreme when they were made acquainted with the brief which Pius VI. had addressed to the emperor, to announce to him that he was determined to pay him a visit, in order to settle in person the points on which they were at variance; and that neither his age, nor the length of the journey should deter him from taking a step which could not fail, he hoped, to re-establish good harmony between them.

This brief had been delivered to Joseph II. by the nuncio Garampi; and its contents were at first to be kept secret. As soon as it was divulged at Vienna, through the indiscretion of the Venetian ambassador, it became the subject of the most malignant reflections. No one would

ever have expected the haughty Vatican to take so humiliating a step. What a triumph for the emperor's vanity! What a mortification for the Holy See! At Rome the same language was held by all ranks of men. They could not pardon the pope's friends for having given him such base advice. What more could the enemies of his repose and glory have done!

The emperor himself was far from expecting such a resolution on the part of the pope; but he dissembled his astonishment. Endeavours were made to alarm him, by observing to him that the presence of the sovereign pontiff might heat the minds of fanatics, and oppose dangerous obstacles to the useful reforms he had undertaken. He contemned such empty terrors. He was accustomed to brave dangers; and those appeared to him nowise formidable. He therefore sent an affectionate answer to Pius VI., in which, after having started some obliging objections relative to his health, he applauded his intention. He acknowledged that nothing was more likely to bring two princes, who had any dispute to settle, to a good understanding, than a personal interview.

Some people did Pius VI. the honour to believe that his proposal of going to Vienna was no more than an empty demonstration, from which he had expected a good effect; that he



was in hopes it would be taken as a striking proof of his apostolical zeal; and that he would be compared to the good shepherd in the gospel, who went in search of his lost sheep; but that he depended upon the emperor's not taking him at his word. Those who knew Pius VI. well, thought him perfectly incapable of such a calculation. The truth was, that, depending much upon his eloquence, and upon his other means of seduction, he flattered himself that he should not meet with a personal refusal from the emperor; that his presence would awaken the zeal of the German bishops; and that his triumph would be infallible. Joseph II. thought otherwise, and was justified by the event. It is well known, that even before the departure of Pius VI. that prince expressed himself thus: "If the pope comes only in hopes of obtaining from me the slightest change in the system I have adopted in ecclesiastical affairs, he may spare himself the trouble of so long a journey." Several months still passed between the acknowledgment required by Joseph II. and the departure of Pius VI.; and that time was spent in intrigues, conjectures, and attempts to shake his resolution. It was exceedingly unpleasant to the eldest of his nephews. The pope, in his opinion, was exposing himself to ever-

lasting ridicule; and then, reverting to himself, he saw his fortune endangered, in case his uncle should happen to die upon the road. What was to become of those brilliant enterprises, that did so much honour to his pontificate? Yes, cried he mournfully, the pope is guided by perfidious counsels. His enemies wish to kill him with chagrin and shame. Bernis, who sincerely interested himself in his glory and peace, hoped that it was still time to dissuade him; and, without taking offence at his reserve, which did not so much indicate a want of confidence as the dread with which he was inspired by the austerity of his advice, addressed to him a pressing letter to the following effect:

“Every body is of opinion that you are about to take an improper step, which, without being of the smallest advantage to the Holy See, will be a disgrace to the pontifical dignity. Even at Rome, it is already turned into ridicule. Now you know with what effect that weapon is used against religion and its ministers. Those who are about your person dare not oppose your wishes. They are ill acquainted with the spirit of courts, and the spirit of the age. For heaven’s sake then, holy father, suspend the execution of your project, till you know the sentiments of the courts of France and Spain, and of such

"others whose opinion ought to have any weight  
 "with you, &c."

This lesson, although a little severe, was well received; for Pius VI., in spite of his habitual obstinacy, was not offended with remonstrances, which he was convinced were made with a good intention; but his flatterers gained the day; and among those there were probably some ambitious priests, who were in hopes that the pontiff's chagrin would soon occasion a vacancy in the Holy See. They were not as yet acquainted with that happy impassibility, which kept him in an excellent state of health in the midst of storms, and has since enabled him to survive the greatest calamities. Pius VI., however, was pleased to enter into a sort of discussion with the cardinal de Bernis. His great argument was, that he had made a promise to the emperor, who had taken him at his word. He quoted with much complacency the affectionate expressions of that prince.—"But you see," replied his sincere friends, "that the emperor tells you beforehand, that nothing is capable of making him change his determination. Why then should you take so degrading a step to no purpose?"

This reflection made him hesitate for some time. To satisfy his mind completely, he came to the resolution of consulting seven cardinals separately. They all gave their opinion in



writing, and unknown to each other; and all of them voted for the journey to Vienna. This unanimity appeared to the superstitious pontiff to be altogether supernatural. Thus it was that formerly the version of the Septuagint was dictated by the Holy Ghost itself. A single cardinal had, however, been of opinion, that it might, *perhaps*, be worth while to consult the catholic courts. But the pope pretended that the delay which would result from following this single opinion would *irritate the emperor*; and besides, that the catholic courts might be afraid of involving themselves in some difficulty with that prince. He had, in his own opinion, irrefutable answers to all objections. Did any one speak to him of the dangers he might incur, or at least of the affronts to which he was going to expose himself, he replied with an air of ingenuous zeal, that might have been interesting if the desire of acquiring celebrity by so striking a measure, and of exhibiting his person, had not been uppermost among the motives of his conduct; he replied: "I am going to Vienna, as I would go to martyrdom. For the interest of religion, we ought to expose even our lives. We are not at liberty to abandon the vessel of the church in the most violent storms." When any one pointed out to him the raillery of which he was sure to be the object: "It matters little," said he,

"whether the Imperial ministers turn me into  
 "ridicule: their sentiments are well known  
 "(this was particularly pointed at M. de Kau-  
 "nitz). Do we not know that we are bound  
 "to suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ."

This latter fear was principally excited by his  
 ostentatious devotion, which afforded ample  
 scope to ridicule; by his want of knowledge of  
 the customs of the world, and by ignorance of  
 every thing that did not immediately relate to  
 ecclesiastical affairs. The persons who were to  
 attend him on his journey were by no means  
 calculated to guard him against the commission  
 of follies and faults. He took with him the  
 abbé Ponzetti, his confessor, a spy of the society  
 of the Jesuits, who was infected with extrava-  
 gant principles, and who had wit enough to  
 make him dangerous; a patriarch Marucci,  
 and an archbishop Contessini, both of them  
 strongly tinctured with Jesuitism, as well as the  
 rest of his retinue, and to render the absurdity  
 complete, the prelate Dini, his master of the  
 ceremonies, the man who had insisted the most  
 strenuously upon denying funeral honours to  
 Maria Theresa, was likewise of the party. "The pope concluded his reply to the cardinal  
 de Bernis, by telling him that he was going as  
 soon as possible to pay a visit to the emperor,  
 according to the promise he had lately made."

Bernis was not discouraged. He combated the resolution of Pius VI. with new remonstrances. "Do not confide solely in those whom you have consulted. There are in the sacred college others capable of giving you advice. Those even, by whose apparent opinion you regulate your conduct, hold a very different language when they are not in your presence. Besides, are theologians good judges of decorum and political propriety? Rely rather upon those who have some knowledge of the world and of courts. Your nuncio at Vienna is in a difficult situation; and it is natural that he should wish you to come to his assistance. You are going to give the signal of a paper war, to give birth to a discussion which the very interest of religion requires you to avoid. Does not the true welfare of the church consist in peace and concord?" The cardinal de Bernis concluded this affecting note by a phrase suitable to his profession: *Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem.*

But the resolution of Pius VI. was taken, and nothing could move him. When his determination appeared irrevocable, his sincere friends, who were not numerous, expressed their opinion of it to the following effect. "A particular kind of enthusiasm, a fondness for extraordinary things, a mistaken zeal, a little too much



“vanity and presumption, bad advice given for  
 “the most part with an evil intention, and a  
 “complete ignorance of the world and of courts,  
 “have prevailed over good sense, friendship, and  
 “the true interests of the church and of the  
 “Holy See. God is not obliged to counteract by  
 “miracles the imprudence of his vicars.”

Till the last moment his friends were in hopes that the projected journey would not take place; that by some pretext, either on one side or the other, this singular interview would be eluded; but each party thought himself bound by his word. Every thing, even to his religious scruples, confirmed the pope in his resolution; for he knew that Joseph had said to Garampi, the nuncio, “His holiness is obliged to come and  
 “confer with me, if he does not wish to forfeit  
 “his word, and to devote himself to ridicule  
 “and reprobation.”

Pius VI. therefore made very serious preparations for his journey. It was his first intention to travel *incognito*, under the name of *Bishop of St. John of Lateran*, to alight at Vienna at the palace of his nuncio, and thence to repair to the castle of Schoenbrun, where apartments were to be provided for him. But Joseph II., under an appearance of religious respect for the head of the church, was not sorry to add every circumstance of parade to the homage that was

about to be paid him. He insisted that the pontiff should lodge in his palace at Vienna; and ordered an apartment, superbly furnished, to be prepared for his reception. In the oratory, which he intended for his use, he had a magnificent altar erected, and took care to lay upon it holy relics, and a crucifix of great value; the very crucifix which was said to have spoken to one of his predecessors, Ferdinand II. The emperor wished to flatter the pope's devotion, and at the same time to evince his own.

On the 25th day of February, Pius VI. held a consistory, in which, among other regulations, he settled that the reins of government should, during his absence, be committed to the hands of the cardinal-vicar Colonna. Foreseeing the possibility of his dying before his return, he annulled the bull, *Ubi papa, ibi Roma*; and ordered by a brief, that the conclave for the choice of his successor should be held at Rome, even if he should happen to die in any distant part. The health of cardinal Pallavicini, the secretary of state, being at that time precarious, he nominated, in a sealed note, the person who was to succeed him in case of his demise.

After the cares required by the church, those due to affection occupied his mind. He sent for his nephew, count Onesti, and delivered to him his last will. "If I die during my journey,"

said he, "you will here find my final intentions. Remember me in your prayers. Farewell!"—The nephew seemed much affected; and the pope, who wept in circumstances less moving, turned aside to hide his tears.

The holy apostles were not to be forgotten on the eve of so important a measure. On the 26th of February, during the silence of the night, Pius VI. descended to their tombs, under the principal altar of St. Peter's church, piously implored their assistance, and performed divine worship. With such preparations, he could not fail to have a prosperous journey.



## CHAPTER XII.

*The Pope's Journey to Vienna.*

THE following day was fixed for the departure of Pius VI. Early in the morning he repaired to the Vatican; offered up his prayers to the deity; afterwards went to St. Peter's; there heard mass; and then retired to that pompous sacristy, built and decorated, by his orders, at such great expense. It was there that he took leave of the heirs to the throne of Russia, of the count and countess du Nord, who, a few days before, had returned from Naples. They made him a present of a superb *pelisse*, and attended him to his carriage. Pius VI. seemed very sensible of these delicate marks of attention shewn to him by a schismatic prince and princess, at a time, when he had so little reason to be satisfied with the court of Naples, and the grand duke of Tuscany, and when he was setting off on a journey undertaken in order to mollify the rigour of the first catholic monarch in Europe. At length he got into his carriage, in the presence of an immense crowd, who with loud cries implored his last benediction. The most noisy acclamations accompanied him

through all the streets of Rome, and to the end of the first stage. He might at that time have mistaken the sentiments with which he inspired his subjects. The good wishes that he carried away with him seemed ardent, sincere, and unanimous; but who does not know the nature of the populace, and especially of the populace of Rome?

Among the preparations for the journey, nothing was forgotten that might serve for the personal decoration of the sovereign pontiff, or exhibit his munificence. He took with him the tiara, and two crofiers magnificently ornamented, which were generally deposited at the castle of St. Angelo; for it was his intention to display at Vienna all the pomp of the pontifical dignity. He was provident enough to take with him also four cardinals' hats, destined for the German prelates whom he purposed to invest with the Roman purple. He ordered a thousand gold medals to be struck, each worth fifteen crowns, and bearing on one side a representation of the holy apostles, and on the other his own portrait. These he distributed on the road. Eighty thousand Roman crowns were set apart to defray the expenses of the whole journey.

All this parade might dazzle fools, but it did not diminish the humiliation attendant upon the step taken by the pope. How unlike was Pius

VI. to that pontiff who set the Imperial crown upon the head of Charlemagne; to the arrogant Gregory VII., who left the excommunicated emperor Henry IV. suppliant, and exposed to the inclemency of the weather for several nights, in the ditch of the castle of Canossa; and to the fiery Innocent IV., proscribing Frederick II., releasing his subjects from the oath of fidelity, and successfully opposing the thunder of the Vatican to the triumph of that warlike prince. Pius VI. was far from being that imperious, that outrageous fanatic; but he was expiating the insolence of his predecessors; while Joseph II., under an appearance of urbanity, was avenging the affronts that had been offered to his.

Pius VI. considered his journey as a mere proof of his apostolical zeal; and feasted his vanity upon the homage he was about to receive in the course of his long route.

Before he quitted Rome, he performed a last act of devotion. He stopped at the door of the fathers of the oratory of Santa Maria di Vellucella, offered up a prayer, stepped again into his carriage, and finally departed by the gate called *La porta del popolo*.

The principal noblemen of Rome, accompanied him as far as Otricoli, a small town, since rendered famous by our victories over the Nea-



politans. It was there that his nephew, the prelate Braschi, and the governor of Rome took leave of him. Wishing to give the Russian prince and princess a last proof of kindness, and, though absent, to do the honours of his capital, he sent orders from Otricoli to entertain them with an illumination of St. Peter's church, and an exhibition of fire-works in the castle of St. Angelo.

On the third day he arrived at Tolentino, at that place, where, fourteen years afterwards, he was for some short time to preserve his throne by painful sacrifices. It is there that rest the bones of a saint held in high veneration in the country, and known to the devout of Europe by the name of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. A warlike prince, when he travels, visits fortresses and celebrated camps. A philosophical prince goes to observe, and to encourage useful public establishments. The travels of a pope are one continual pilgrimage, excepting, indeed, the customary penance and privations. Pius VI. went every where to worship bones, to celebrate miracles, to offer up prayers, to bestow benedictions, to hold out his slipper to be kissed by a few privileged persons, and his hand by every body; and this is what will be called an apostolical journey.

His route led him to our Lady of Loretto.

He made a pause before the sacred image; admired the brilliant offerings with which ostentatious devotion had enriched it, and added to them his own. Every where the devout and the curious crowded round him; every where the prelates and dignitaries of the court of Rome hastened from all quarters to swell his retinue; and every where the pontiff, surrounded by glory, distributed his benedictions with no sparing hand.

In his way to Cesena, his native place, he was obliged to pass that river which is so famous in the history of the Roman republic. The sight of it awakened ideas, which flattery did not fail to turn to account. Formerly, said his adulators, Cæsar passed the Rubicon to make war upon Rome: the pope is now passing it to offer peace to Cæsar. This comparison would have sufficed to console the vanity of Pius VI.; but as yet it did not stand in need of consolation.

At Cesena, he found himself surrounded by his family of both sexes, and of all ages. The severe *étiquette*, which constantly insulates the sovereign pontiff, was laid aside; and men, women, and children, were admitted to his table. He appeared to be much moved by this assemblage; but he was, perhaps, still more sensibly affected, upon perceiving the arrival of count Zambeccari, one of the forty senators of Bo-

logna, appointed minister plenipotentiary by the king of Spain, to compliment him on his journey.

Charles III. wrote to him with his own hand : " I envy the emperor," said he, " the happiness which he is about to derive from your company at Vienna. I should desire nothing so much as to enjoy the like." Such is the language of courts. It is well known that the ridiculous journey of the pope was not less disapproved of at Madrid than at Versailles ; but Charles III. was not undeserving of the title of catholic king, and felt *his royal heart* much interested in the honour of the Holy See.

On his arrival at Imola the following morning (the 8th of March), Pius VI. received the homage of another crowned head. The king of Sardinia sent several noblemen of his court to compliment him. The next day, the pious duke of Parma came to perform the same duty in person. He kissed the pontiff's hand and slipper, and returned contented.

The pope found at Ferrara one of the emperor's life-guards, who was come from Vienna to meet him. The day after his departure from Rome, the emperor's answer, which he did not choose to wait for, had arrived : it was as affectionate as the first ; but it deprived him, nevertheless, of the hope of effecting any change in



the emperor's plans. Many persons regretted that he had not deferred his departure for four and twenty hours, thinking that this answer would, perhaps, have cured him. They were but little acquainted with Pius VI. Obstinate and presumptuous, he could see nothing in the emperor's letter but what was calculated to flatter his vanity. Joseph, after repeating that he was immoveably fixed in his resolutions, added the following words:—*I expect your visit; but I beg you to accept the use of my palace, which will be much more convenient both for you and for me; since, as we shall have a great many things to discuss together, we must not let the prying public have the malicious pleasure of counting the number of our interviews.*

Joseph had hoped that Pius VI. would divine his secret intentions. But when he heard that he had taken his letter in the literal sense, and that he was set off from Rome, his whole thoughts were occupied in preparing for him the most dazzling reception. The courier whom he dispatched, had orders not to stop till he met him. The letters which he delivered to the pope announced that the emperor had fitted up an apartment for him in his residence at Vienna, which was the very same that had been occupied by the late empress, and that he might expect a reception worthy of his supreme rank. Pius VI. could not conceal his satisfaction. He enjoyed,

by anticipation, the tributes of respect and love with which he was about to be overwhelmed. After quitting Ferrara, and arriving upon the banks of the Po, he found the bucentaur, which the senate of Venice had ordered to be prepared for his accommodation, and an immense crowd waiting for him by the side of the river. In this manner he was conducted to the place where the Adige falls into the Po; and thence to the island of Chiozza, where he was complimented by the Venetian prelates, the doge, and the senate, represented by the two procurators of St. Mark, who accompanied him to the frontiers of the Venetian state. The Sacred College was much afraid lest Pius VI., led away by a thirst of honours, should be tempted to appear in the capital of the republic. According to the cardinals, the Venetians did not deserve such an attention on the part of the sovereign pontiff. For a long time past they had shewn very little respect to the Holy See; and it was they who had set the emperor examples which he had but too well followed.

For this once Pius VI. spared the Sacred College that additional vexation. He contented himself with travelling through the whole Venetian state, leaving Venice very near him upon his right. When he arrived at the canals of the lake, from whence there is a prospect of the

*queen of the seas*, he found a great number of boats and gondolas, which scarcely left room for the richly decorated vessel on board of which he was received. At the sight of him the whole crowd fell prostrate, and craved and obtained his benediction. The women wept with joy, and all the neighbouring trees bent beneath the weight of curious spectators. At length he disembarked at Malgara, and found the steps of the landing-place covered with a rich carpet. The bishop of Treviso was waiting for him at the top of them, and conducted him to Mestre, where he was received by all the great personages of the environs, by the ambassadors of Spain and Austria, and by his own nuncio, all come from Venice in order to catch a benediction as he passed. After making some stop at Treviso, he crossed the Piava over a bridge built on purpose for him, and the Tagliamento, in a boat magnificently ornamented; and at length arrived at Udina, the last town of that republic, the government of which affected to prove to him that it was as ready to pay empty homage to the person of the head of the church, as it was backward in shewing marks of deference to his authority.

At length he reached the frontiers of the dominions of a sovereign, far more formidable in his caprices, who was preparing to administer to



him the same consolation. On the 14th of March he arrived at Goertz, or Goritz, the first town in Austria. He found there Garampi, the nuncio, count Cobenzel, the emperor's vice-chancellor, a squadron of the life-guards, and several Austrian noblemen. Every thing promised him the most brilliant reception; but his joy was a little disturbed when he learnt that the archbishop of Goertz had just been sent for to Vienna to receive a severe reprimand. He was about to expiate his blind devotion to the Holy See. He had refused to publish the edicts of toleration in his diocese, and had dared to appeal to Rome. Pius VI. pretty well concealed his painful feelings at this first proof of Joseph's inflexibility, and uttered these remarkable words, from which the persons present drew various inferences:—*It is very right; the sovereign's orders should be punctually obeyed.* But those who record the words of great personages should be accompanied by a musician and a painter; one to note down the tone in which they are spoken, the other to pourtray the features of the speaker: we should then know in what way they ought to be interpreted. Upon the arrival of the archbishop of Goertz at Vienna, a very embarrassing alternative was proposed to him. "Sign one of these two writings," said the severe commission before which he was summoned. The

one was the resignation of his archbishopric; the other an oath of obedience to the emperor's orders. A day which he asked for consideration not being granted him, he signed the oath, confessed that he had grossly disobeyed the emperor's orders, and threw himself upon his clemency. He afterwards received a severe reprimand; was obliged to listen to a long lecture concerning the duty of bishops towards their sovereign; and received orders to repair to his diocese, without so much as seeing Pius VI., who had arrived in the mean time, and to take care that the edicts he had suspended were put in execution. He was besides threatened with a heavy fine if he made the smallest delay, and condemned to pay fifteen hundred florins a year for the support of a pious foundation. The pope was certainly bound to intercede for him with the emperor; but his entreaties were of no avail. How ill did this augur to the success of his apostolical journey!

But let us continue to follow him upon the road to Vienna. On his arrival at Laybach, in Carniola, he found there the arch-duchess Mary Anne, the emperor's eldest sister, whom devotion had brought from her convent of Clagenfurt to the feet of the sovereign pontiff. She was going to prostrate herself before him in reality. The pope hastened to raise her, but could not pre-

vent her from kissing his hand; and much were the pious spectators edified by the humble devotion of the princess, and the modest and kind demeanour of the pontiff. The religious homage of the archduchess was the better received, as the rest of the family had given so much vexation to Pius VI., and held out to him a prospect of more. He intimated his alarms to the illustrious confidant, who repaid his abundant benedictions with the only thing she had at her disposal—fruitless wishes, and vain words of encouragement.

At Laybach, at Marpurg, and at Gratz in Stiria, he found himself surrounded by the same concourse of curious people and devotees. In the first of those cities he walked during a whole hour between two thick rows of spectators. At Gratz the public curiosity was still greater; the crowd pressed very close to him; every one wishing to kiss, or at least to touch the sacred vestments of the pontiff. In the midst of all this homage, how was it possible to suppose that he was no more than a man! Accordingly Pius VI. identified himself with him whose vicar he called himself; and seeing that attempts were made to keep off the crowd of the faithful, pronounced with pious pride these words of St. Mark: *Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.*



Pius VI. was not far from the gates of Vienna, and the tribute of respect was about to become still more striking. Joseph II. could not prevent his malignity from adding to it some sarcasms, both in words and actions. He sent to meet him three nobles of the Hungarian guard, who were to serve him as couriers; and to accustom the pope to his principles of toleration, chose them out of the three religions established in Germany. One was a Catholic, the other a Lutheran, the third a Calvinist. Cardinal Megazzi, archbishop of Vienna, when setting off to meet him, asked the emperor if the bells of the capital were to be rung at the moment of the pope's making his entry. *A fine question, indeed,* answered Joseph, *are not the bells your artillery?*

The emperor and his brother Maximilian went to meet the pontiff as far as Neunkirchen, a town at a few leagues distance from Vienna. As soon as they perceived his carriage, they alighted; the pope hastened to do the like, and the greetings on both sides were very affectionate. The pope embraced the emperor, and gave him three fraternal kisses. The spectators even thought they observed the tears standing in the eyes of both the eminent personages; one of whom wept easily, and the other when he pleased. The emperor took the pope into his carriage, and seated him on his right hand; and

during their entry into Vienna, which was pompous and noisy (it was on the 22d of March, 1782), the holy father did not cease to bestow the treasures of his benediction upon an immense crowd of the faithful, intoxicated with joy and devotion.

The pope, enchanted with his reception, was desirous that, even before they arrived at Vienna, his austere, but real friends, Bernis and Azara, should partake of his satisfaction. He sent them word, through the medium of cardinal Pallavicini, that he received upon every occasion the most flattering testimonies of the emperor's affection. Hence, by his account, it was natural to conclude that Joseph was pleased with his journey, and most favourably disposed towards him. These two intelligent ministers would have been diverted by his presumption, if their regard for him had been less sincere.

They heard with pleasure that he had succeeded perfectly well in his *début* at Vienna. His appearance was considered as highly prepossessing; his manners were thought a happy mixture of dignity, affability, and modesty. It was well known, however, that Joseph II., who, in spite of his great qualities, sometimes exhibited a littleness of mind, had taken offence at the acclamations he had met with on his route. It was well known that he was particularly

vexed at finding that the pope had taken the liberty of reprimanding the bishops who had published his imperial decrees with affected goodwill. He did not even disguise from him his sentiments on that head; but that was a circumstance Pius VI. took great care to conceal. A few days after his arrival at Vienna, he wrote to the cardinal de Bernis, and dwelt much upon the entertainments given him by the emperor, and upon the compliments he received from him; but not a word did he say of his negotiation. He enjoined the same silence to all who accompanied him; but the true causes of this reserve were well understood at Rome.

The cardinals were of opinion that he had done a great deal too much for the republic of Venice, of which he had so great reason to complain. They laughed at the importance he attached to popular acclamations, and to those empty homages of *étiquette* which make no alteration in matters of importance. They were afraid that, blinded by his vanity, he would enter into some disgraceful capitulation. "We would much rather," said they, "that he should return without having obtained any thing, than that he should repay the fine words and wheedling of the emperor, by giving up any part whatever of the prerogatives of the Roman church." They had not yet sounded the depth of the abyss that



enviored the Holy See. The people of Rome were still more stupidly obstinate in their fanaticism. They were heard to say, *St. Peter will not abandon him. If the emperor refuse to comply with the demands of the pope, he will be struck blind.* In reality, Joseph II. had at this time bad eyes; and was eleven days without seeing the pope, or without being able to communicate with him otherwise than by writing. The Romans already began to triumph; but a prudent regimen, and the oculists of Vienna gave the lie to the prophecy.

We refer to the newspapers of the times those who wish to be informed of the minute details of the pope's stay at Vienna, and are desirous of knowing to what religious ceremonies, and to what festivals, the thirty-one days that he passed there were devoted. Suffice it for us to say, that the emperor studiously displayed before the eyes of the pontiff every thing that could give him a high idea of the magnificence of his capital, or tend to excite his admiration of his palaces, his galleries of pictures, his manufactures, and his public establishments; while Pius VI. was in like manner anxious to exhibit all the pompous ceremonies of the Roman religion, in order to dazzle the eyes of the superstitious Austrians with every thing that renders the head of the catholic church awful to the vulgar. He does

not appear to have failed in his object. The attention he attracted at Vienna was very great, if we may judge by the report of all the eye-witnesses, particularly by what a Lutheran, whose testimony cannot be suspicious, wrote at the time to one of his friends. "The effect of the pope's presence at Vienna," said he, "is wonderful; and I am not astonished at its having formerly produced such strange revolutions. I have seen the pontiff several times at the moment he was giving his benediction to the people of this capital. I am not a catholic, neither am I easily moved; but I do assure you that the sight drew tears from me. You cannot conceive how interesting it is to see more than fifty thousand persons assembled in the same place by the same sentiment, expressing in their looks and gestures the devotion and enthusiasm with which they wait for a benediction that they conceive essential to their prosperity on earth, and to their happiness in another world. Entirely occupied with that idea, they were perfectly insensible to the inconvenience of their situation. Crowded one against another, and scarcely breathing, they saw the head of the catholic church appear in all his pomp; the tiara on his head, dressed in pontifical robes, sacred in their eyes, and magnificent in those of every

“ person, surrounded by all the cardinals who  
 “ happened to be then at Vienna, and by all  
 “ the dignified clergy. The pontiff bent down  
 “ his body towards the earth, raised his arms  
 “ to heaven in the attitude of a person  
 “ firmly persuaded that he is conveying thither  
 “ the vows of a multitude of men, and ex-  
 “ pressing in his looks his ardent desire that  
 “ they may be heard. Let any one figure to  
 “ himself these functions performed by an old  
 “ man of a majestic person, and of the most  
 “ noble and pleasing countenance; and let him,  
 “ if he can, help feeling a strong emotion when  
 “ he sees this immense crowd fall upon their  
 “ knees at the moment the benediction is given,  
 “ and receive it with the same enthusiasm that  
 “ seems to animate him by whom it is bestowed.  
 “ For my part, I confess that the impression  
 “ made upon me by this scene will not be  
 “ effaced while I live. How strong and deep  
 “ must it then be in the minds of those who are  
 “ disposed to let themselves be led away by  
 “ external acts of devotion !”

The pope happened to be at Vienna during  
 Passion and Easter weeks; the time of all others  
 the most favourable for the display of the cere-  
 monies of the Roman-catholic church. Joseph  
 availed himself of the circumstance to destroy  
 the prejudices which his philosophy had raised



in the minds of the devout, and to prove that it was not incompatible with religion. He piously attended divine worship, which was performed with the greatest imaginable pomp; and allowed the pope to have the honour of taking his place on that day, when, in celebrating the institution of the Lord's Supper, the pride of sovereign grandeur condescends to wash the feet of twelve indigent old men, and to wait upon them at table. Joseph himself selected these representatives of the twelve apostles; one of whom was a hundred and six years of age. In the morning he received the sacrament, as did his brother the arch-duke, from the hand of the sovereign pontiff. They were afterwards present at the ceremony, but *incognito*. The pope, after blessing the dishes, put them himself upon the table of the guests. He offered one to the emperor, who excused himself by saying that he was there merely as a spectator. Each of the poor men received twenty ducats from his hands, and two medals of gold and silver from those of Pius VI. Easter Sunday was distinguished by a grand ceremony of another kind. The pope celebrated high mass with a degree of solemnity unexampled at Vienna. The two princes of Schwartzenberg and Aversperg washed his hands by turns. After the gospel he delivered a discourse in Latin, and had the double pleasure of dis-

playing his eloquence, and making an impression upon the feelings of his auditors.

Notwithstanding all the precautions of the police to prevent the accidents inevitable in such crowds, the performance of these august ceremonies gave occasion to contusions and broken arms; and more than once the great market-place was strewed with lost shoes and hats; but every thing was compensated by the happiness of beholding the pontiff, and of receiving his benediction. The eager desire to get a sight of him upon the road bordered upon phrensy. The course of the Danube was often obstructed by the multitude of boats going up and down, full of curious spectators. Crowds of twenty and thirty thousand persons assembled in the streets that lead to the emperor's residence, calling with loud cries for the benediction of the pope. All the avenues to it were blocked up, and more than once a day Pius VI. was obliged to appear in his balcony, and to bestow upon the impatient crowd the cheap favour which they implored with so much ardour. Scarcely were they thus dismissed, when their place was occupied by another multitude ambitious of the same honour. The influx of strangers into Vienna was so prodigious, that apprehensions of a want of provisions were for some time entertained. People crowded from the most remote

parts of the hereditary states. The whimsical obstinacy of a peasant was remarked, who was come sixty leagues to see the pope. On his arrival he went and placed himself in one of the halls belonging to the apartment occupied by the pope. "What do you want here?" said one of the guards.—"I wish to see the pope."—"You cannot see him here; begone about your business!"—"No, no! I will wait till he comes, I am in no hurry; go on with what you are about;" and upon this he sat down, and ate his bread very quietly. He had been waiting in this manner for some hours; when the emperor, being informed of his perseverance, himself introduced him to the pope, who received the honest villager very graciously, gave him his hand to kiss, bestowed on him his benediction, and also one of the medals which he had brought with him from Rome. *How cunning the people of Vienna are, said the peasant, retiring with great satisfaction: they took good care not to tell me the pope gave money to those who went to see him.*

It was not his person alone which was the object of veneration. No one is ignorant of the sort of worship which the Roman pontiffs suffered to be paid to the most ignoble part of their dress. Pius VI. had foreseen that it would not be refused by the superstitious people of Vienna, and had not forgot his slipper. It was placed



upon a cushion in the audience chamber, and was kissed by all the ecclesiastics, who presented themselves in crowds, by many devotees of every class, and even by many persons attracted by curiosity alone, who wished to enjoy the malicious pleasure of playing their part in the most ridiculous scene, perhaps, that superstition ever invented to debase mankind. The holy slipper was even carried about as a relic to several of the most distinguished houses of Vienna; but the greater part of the laity were only permitted to kiss his hand, and the fisherman's ring with which it was adorned.

These enjoyments, however, which so many public and private homages afforded to the vanity of Pius VI., were embittered by several mortifications in more essential matters. Few persons were in the secret of the frequent conferences which he held with the emperor. It is from the consequences alone, that we know he had little reason to be as well satisfied with them as he affected to say he was after his departure from Vienna. He even experienced, during his stay there, several disappointments which belied his assertions. It was discovered that, in his conversations with the emperor, the great questions which had given occasion to his journey were never thoroughly discussed. In the emperor's closet only one single political conference

took place, at which were present prince Kaunitz, cardinal Migazzi, archbishop of Vienna, and cardinal Herzan, the emperor's minister at Rome. The pope endeavoured to move Joseph II. by a pathetic speech, which he interspersed with arguments drawn from the canon law. He had no reason to congratulate himself on the success of his harangue. The emperor evaded all discussion. "I am no theologian," answered he; "I am too little acquainted with the canon law to enter into a verbal argument. Your holiness will have the goodness to commit to paper the representations you may think proper to address to me, in order that I may submit them to the examination of my theologians. Cardinal Herzan has already informed you of the resolutions I have taken relative to the churches and convents in my dominions. My only object in every thing that has been done, or that yet remains to be done, is the good of my subjects. The new arrangements that I have determined upon were indispensably necessary; and I will maintain them with the greater firmness, as not one of them affects, in the slightest degree, the doctrine of the church. If your holiness wishes for a more ample explanation, you may deliver your objections in writing; my chancellor will answer them officially, and in the

“ fullest manner, and I will even have them  
 “ printed for the information of my subjects.”  
 This was giving him sufficiently to understand  
 what he had to expect. The formidable chan-  
 cellor in question was the prince de Kaunitz [no  
 less a philosopher, and, perhaps, still more inflex-  
 ible, than the emperor himself], whose frigid de-  
 meanour and silence it was not easy for Pius VI.  
 to misconstrue. He endeavoured, by fawning  
 and flattery, to smooth the rugged brow of the  
 prime minister, and received in return nothing  
 but cold politeness and unmeaning answers.

He expected at least to receive the first visit  
 from him. The minister of the emperor could  
 never entertain the presumptuous idea of its  
 being paid him by the sovereign pontiff of the  
 universal church. Thus reasoned Pius VI.  
 Pius VI. reasoned ill. The pride of prince  
 Kaunitz could not even stoop before the Holy  
 See. Pius VI., who was desirous of viewing his  
 magnificent apartments, particularly his gallery  
 of pictures, was at length forced to make ad-  
 vances highly repugnant to his dignity. He sent  
 to inquire when he could have an opportunity  
 of seeing him, and of admiring the curiosities his  
 palace contained. Kaunitz fixed a day and an  
 hour, and the pope was punctual to the appoint-  
 ment. On reaching the chancellor's house, he  
 found his family dressed in superb gala suits, and



his servants clad in their richest liveries. The gate-way, the stair-case, and the vestibule were full of men who came out to meet him, and were eager to pay him the honours due to his supreme rank. He prepared himself for the most distinguished reception on the part of the master of the house. He was already in his apartments, when the prince de Kaunitz at length made his appearance, but in a morning dress, and with an air rather familiar than respectful. Pius VI. held out his hand to him. Instead of kissing it, as the pope naturally expected, in conformity with a custom from which nobody had ever derogated, Kaunitz laid hold of it, shook it, and squeezed it in a very affectionate manner, which much astonished the pontiff, and greatly scandalised every body present. With affected politeness, he afterwards insisted upon being his *Cicerone*. He pointed out to him the beauties of his pictures. He made him walk forwards, step back, turn to the right, and to the left, in order that he might see each of them in its proper light. This was the first time that Pius VI. ever felt himself pulled and pushed about in every direction by a profane hand; he who was never approached but with an air of the most respectful awe, nor ever touched unless to receive homage. It was not without difficulty that he preserved his composure during the

whole of this scene, which appeared strange to every body, except to the principal actor; and, that he might not increase the mortification that he was made to undergo, by appearing to be sensible of it, he was obliged to testify his acknowledgments to prince de Kaunitz for this extreme complaisance, of which he, indeed, received no other proof. The fine arts were the only subject on which the grave and austere chancellor could talk with the sovereign pontiff. He evaded all conversation upon other topics; and if a judgment could be formed of the sovereign by his minister, Pius VI. had no reason to hope that he should derive any benefit from his journey. In fact he found Joseph II. much more open and kind than the prince de Kaunitz; but fully as inflexible. He soon had an opportunity of judging of the degree to which the emperor was tenacious of his political maxims, even in the most minute circumstances.

The Barnabites had just erected in their church a marble altar, which cardinal Migazzi consecrated. The monks solicited of the pope a plenary indulgence for this altar. The favour, which was very insignificant, and little interesting to the emperor, was readily granted by the pope, by a brief which he wrote with his own hand. But the provincial of the Barnabites being desirous of having the brief printed, could

not obtain permission to have it done till after it had undergone the formalities required by the new ordinances; that is, till after it had been signed by the emperor, like any other brief that might have been made out at Rome.

Notwithstanding these unpleasant appearances, Pius VI. was, or at least pretended to be, satisfied with the emperor. It is true that, in other respects, he obtained from Joseph every thing that was calculated to flatter his vanity. Their conferences were of the most friendly kind. The emperor spoke to him confidentially concerning the principal personages in Europe, and the interest of the other courts; and even made discoveries to him which might have appeared indiscreet. At no one time did he shew the smallest symptom of ill-humour; which was most assuredly, on the part of Joseph, a strong proof of the desire he felt to please the pontiff.

The pope, on his side, neglected nothing to render himself agreeable to the emperor. He took every opportunity of praising his affability, his information, his strong and cultivated mind, and even his devotion. In this latter particular he was even guilty of an imprudence, the intention of which might be good, but which was censured at Rome with great severity. There were then at Vienna four cardinals; Migazzi, Herzan, Firmian, bishop of Passau, and Batthyani,



an Hungarian nobleman. This was one more than, strictly speaking, was absolutely necessary to a consistory. Pius VI. had sufficiently shewn his fondness for parade. He afforded a fresh proof of it by holding a consistory at Vienna, under the pretence of giving the hat to Firmian and Batthyani, the two cardinals. In this assembly, at which Joseph II. and his brother Maximilian were present, he delivered a Latin discourse, which he concluded with a pompous panegyric on the emperor. "We have had," cried he with enthusiasm, "frequent opportunities of seeing  
 "him; and we cannot help admiring, not only  
 "the unlimited kindness with which he welcomed  
 "us to his imperial residence, and the magnificent  
 "manner in which he there daily receives us, but  
 "also his *uncommon devotion*, his extraordinary  
 "talents, and his incredible application to business. What a consolation for our paternal heart,  
 "to find that piety and religion reign, without  
 "having received the slightest injury, not only in  
 "this splendid capital, but also among all the  
 "inhabitants of the imperial states through which  
 "we passed. We shall never cease then to celebrate his virtues, and to support them with  
 "our fervent prayers. We implore Almighty  
 "God, who never abandons those who seek him,  
 "to strengthen his imperial majesty in his *holy*  
 "resolutions, and to shower down upon him his  
 "celestial grace."

The people of Vienna, to whom the court took care to make known this passage of the speech, through the medium of the press, were much edified by the affecting effusion of the sovereign pontiff. But must not the emperor have laughed within himself at praises so unexpected, and so little deserved? Pius VI., in the simplicity of his heart, justified them in his own eyes, by recalling to mind a conversation he had had with him a few days before. Joseph had asked him, whether, in any one of his new ordinances, there was a single article which affected the Christian doctrine; and whether his holiness must not confess that they related solely to the discipline of the church? Pius VI. had admitted it; upon which the emperor had replied, *I am not then a heretic, as is supposed at Rome.* The pope concluded from this, that the emperor had thought he perceived some charges of heresy in his correspondence with Garampi, his nuncio; and he took, or rather created, an opportunity of making amends for the wrong he had done the illustrious host, by whom he was so well entertained. But the Roman cardinals, who had no apology to make, and who were sensible that the Imperial ordinances attacked ecclesiastical prerogatives much more interesting to them than the doctrine of the church, did not admit the validity of the pope's justification, but asserted, that his pom-

pous harangue, the offspring of his vanity, was a tacit approbation of the emperor's disastrous measures.

While he was boasting of the ascendancy he had gained over him; and while cardinal Herzan was informing his friends at Rome, that the pope never spoke of the emperor but in terms of *admiration and gratitude*, what was the conduct of that prince? He did not even wait for the pontiff's departure to proceed with his reforms; but continued, without the consent of the Holy See, to suppress the monastic orders in the Milanese, and the state of Mantua. Could Pius VI. sincerely believe in Joseph's devotion, which, in his eyes, must have consisted chiefly in shewing a respectful deference to the pontifical authority?

But an explanation of these contradictions is to be found in the inconsistency of his character, and in the facility with which he suffered himself to be dazzled by external homage paid to his person. Joseph, who soon divined his disposition, was not sparing of those means of seduction. In the course of the month of April, the pope was informed by a courier, that unforeseen and important affairs required his speedy return. He immediately began to make preparations for his departure; but it was easily seen that they were not unattended with regret; for he was well aware



that his journey had as yet been productive of no real advantage. Accordingly, when a foreign minister was indiscreet enough to ask him on what day he intended to set off, Pius VI. made answer : *I am pope, it is true, but not prophet : my departure depends upon the issue of my negotiation.* It was, however, foreseen, that it would not be deferred. The emperor ordered an elegant travelling carriage to be prepared for him : the period was now arrived in which he was about to display his magnificence. He made him a present of a *pectoral*\*, enriched with diamonds, valued at two hundred thousand florins. Pius VI. said, on accepting it : “ I shall not consider this present as “ my personal property, but as an appendage of “ the Holy See, for my successors to wear on “ days of great solemnity, as a mark of Imperial benevolence.” Joseph went still farther. He delivered to the pope, by the hands of the vice-chancellor of the empire, a diploma, conferring on his nephew, Lewis Braschi Onesti, the dignity of prince of the holy Roman empire, exempting him at the same time from the fees paid in like cases, which are estimated at ninety thousand florins. Pius VI. exhibited, on this occasion, a very unexpected proof of wisdom, which would have been quite complete, had it not

\* The cross worn upon the breast by the dignified clergy of the Roman catholic church. T.

been extolled by himself. But modesty was not his favourite virtue. He at first accepted the diploma, but afterwards returned it to the emperor, begging him to reserve that favour for a more suitable time. *I should be sorry,* added he, *to have it said, that I have been more attentive to the aggrandisement of my family than to the interest of the church.* The emperor approved this instance of self-denial, and the diploma remained, till further orders, in the hands of prince Colloredo. Magnificent presents were made to the persons who attended the pope. Pius VI., in his turn, could not avoid giving proofs of his liberality to those who had been appointed by the emperor to attend him. This did not fail to increase the cost of a journey already so expensive. It was calculated that this useless whim added a million of Roman crowns to the debts of the Apostolical Chamber. The disbursement of such a sum, especially at a time when the bad administration of public affairs began to excite alarming murmurs, would scarcely have been justified by the most complete success. We shall soon see whether that was the case.

Every circumstance that attended upon the separation of Pius VI., and of the emperor, was calculated to add to the gratitude of the pontiff. Joseph endeavoured to keep up his delusion to the very moment of his departure, and even be-

yond that period. Every thing that was most striking and sumptuous in the *étiquette* of his court was lavishly displayed while he was paying the last honours to his guest, who was become his friend, or who at least indulged that idea. He promised him repeatedly to repay his visit. He was determined to make a proper return. The cases, however, were by no means parallel. The taste of Joseph for travelling was well known; and that taste was neither suitable to the usual age, nor to the situation of the Roman pontiff. But Pius VI., who was always ready to view every thing in the light most gratifying to his vanity, set off highly satisfied with this promise; Joseph and his brother accompanying him to the distance of a league from Vienna. They all three alighted at the church of Mariabrunn; entered it, and after having offered up their prayers with equal fervour, Joseph and the archduke received the embrace and benediction of the holy father, and left him with an appearance of the most lively emotion. The crowd that surrounded them was affected; tears were mingled with acclamations; and the pope took the road that led to the convent of Mœlk, where he was to pass the night.

The monks of Mariabrunn, at the particular request of the pope and the emperor, immortalised the time and place of this affecting separa-



tion. Some months after, the following inscription, in Latin and German, was engraved upon marble, and placed at the entrance of the church :

“ Pius VI., sovereign pontiff, and Joseph II.,  
 “ emperor of the Romans, with the archduke  
 “ Maximilian, after having offered up their  
 “ prayers in this church, parted in the midst of  
 “ the most tender embraces, and of the tears of  
 “ all the spectators.”

But what is still more singular than this monument, is that the very day on which this *aff-  
 feeling* separation took place, the emperor's com-  
 missaries came and declared to the monks, that  
 henceforward his Imperial majesty would save  
 them the trouble of receiving their income, and  
 that their convent was put in séquestration.  
 Upon the communication of this intelligence,  
 they became a little less sensible of the honour  
 they had just received ; and began to suspect  
 that the sovereign pontiff might possibly have  
 made an ineffectual journey.

## CHAPTER XIII.

*The Pope's Return to Rome.*

PIUS VI. did not, or at least pretended not, to participate in the uneasiness which began to be conceived even in Austria, as to the result of his journey. In letters written from Vienna, a few days before his departure, and from several places on the road, he said, indeed, that, though perfectly well satisfied with the reception given him by the emperor, *he had not been able to gain any essential point*; because he, as the head of the church, had not chosen to make concessions repugnant to his feelings. In proportion, however, as he approached his residence, he felt that, to procure a good reception, it was necessary to prepare men's minds by holding a different kind of language. Besides, he had received, while on the road, three letters from the emperor, which, doubtless, inspired him with some vague hopes. He accordingly wrote to his nephew, from Bologna, to the following effect: "I have obtained  
 " from the emperor every thing that I desired.  
 " He has suppressed the new oath which he had  
 " required from the bishops in his dominions;

“ and, on my part, I have given them the power  
 “ of granting dispensations for marriages as far  
 “ as the third and fourth degree of consanguini-  
 “ nity, and even for nearer degrees, only binding  
 “ them to ask my permission in certain cases.—  
 “ I have also obtained several modifications in  
 “ regard to the monasteries of both sexes, and  
 “ to religious toleration.—*Upon the whole,*” added  
 he, “ *my presence has been highly advantageous to*  
 “ *religion; and I cannot help congratulating myself*  
 “ *upon my journey.*”

It is possible that he might be really sincere in  
 thus magnifying himself the very slight advantages  
 that he had gained. His vanity had been  
 completely gratified; and that was a great reason  
 for his *congratulating himself upon his journey*.  
 The truth was, that he had submitted, without  
 difficulty, to the suppression of useless convents;  
 because at the bottom of his heart he was no  
 friend to the monks, and that he had acquiesced  
 in the emperor's maxims of toleration, because  
 he was not himself inclined to persecution. But  
 he returned deeply afflicted by the annihilation  
 of certain bulls; monuments most dear to him,  
 as the authority of the Holy See. He was  
 grieved at the re-establishment of the bishops in  
 their primitive rights, at the measure which sub-  
 jected the monks of their diocese to their autho-  
 rity, and which rendered the latter independent



of their generals resident at Rome. Upon all these points he had in vain endeavoured to convert Joseph and his ministers. He had obtained some promises, which kept alive his delusion. The emperor agreed with him that the superfluous monasteries should be shut up; but that he would not totally suppress any monastic order; and that an *imprimatur* should not be granted for any pamphlet written against the legitimate exercise of the papal authority. For Messrs. Eybel and Sonnenfels, two Austrian writers, examined with great severity the pretensions of the court of Rome; the former in a work entitled, *What is the Pope?* the latter in a publication relative to the journey of Pius VI. Joseph II. permitted him also to hope that, during his pontificate, things should remain upon the old footing as to the bishoprics and benefices of Lombardy. Pius VI., on his departure, had therefore some reason to believe that his apostolical journey had not been altogether ineffectual. But of these two negotiators, each of whom flattered himself, perhaps, that he had over-reached the other, one thought that he has as yet only tasted the first-fruits of his success, the other that he had as yet only put the first hand to his reforms. Soon after one of them discovered that he had been deceived, or at least that he had deceived himself; and the other, that he had remained un-

shaken in his resolutions. But let us follow Pius VI. on his return to Rome.

The day of his departure he slept at Mœlk, in the same convent which, sixteen years afterwards, was intended for his asylum, when, in the first moments of the revolution at Rome, the emperor, the nephew of him who had entertained him in more prosperous times, agreed with the French government to receive him in his dominions. The count de Cobenzel accompanied him as far as Braunau, the first town of Bavaria, on the road from Austria to Rome. The elector was determined that the pope should not perceive that he was travelling in the territory of a different prince. He displayed all the pomp of his army, of his guards, and in short all the magnificence of his court. He went to meet him, seated him in a superb carriage which he took with him on purpose, and conducted him to his capital in the midst of the pious acclamations of a nation which vies in devotion, even with the people of Vienna. He passed six days in the city of Munich, which is called the *Rome of Germany*; and could easily perceive that the title was not ill bestowed. The Bavarian government was far from possessing that philosophical courage which rendered the court of Vienna so formidable to the Holy See. Pius VI. received from it nothing but homages; the enjoyment of

which was disturbed by no unpleasant circumstance. The court of Munich had even carried its attentions so far, as to redouble its orthodoxical severity, in order to prevent the occurrence of any thing which might give the pontiff the smallest alarm. Two days before his arrival, all the booksellers and printers received orders not to sell or publish any work which had not passed through the hands of the electoral censors. His piety and vanity were equally gratified during his stay in Bavaria. It was the only country in Europe where the authority of the Holy See had remained unimpaired. The court, although renowned for gallantry, had preserved a great attachment for every thing that constitutes the external part of religion. The nation was one of the most ignorant, and consequently one of the most superstitious, of the catholic world. Whole legions of fanatical monks formed one of the most valuable divisions of the papal troops. No spark of philosophy had diminished either their pious belief or their blind subordination. The Holy See reckoned in Bavaria alone more than five thousand trusty satellites. The pope was more revered there than in Rome itself, and the homages which he received were equally unanimous and profound. Accordingly when he approached Augsbουργ, and was about to pass the western limits of Bavaria, he turned round



with emotion towards that country so favoured by heaven, and lavished upon it his benedictions and his good wishes, of which it had shewn itself so deserving.

The elector of Treves, who had waited upon him at Munich, attended him as far as Augsbourg, of which he was bishop, and where he had a palace. On entering the territory of that Imperial city, where the sectarists of both religions, the catholic and protestant, are equally tolerated, and have each a share in the government, Pius VI. was, for the first time, in a land infected with heresy; a circumstance which measures had been taken to prevent his perceiving. The catholic magistrates asked their protestant colleagues how they proposed to receive the pope. They answered, that it was contrary to their religious principles to receive him in that quality; but that they respected him as a crowned head, and would readily concur in any homage which might be paid him upon that ground. They kept their word. Pius VI. was complimented by a deputation of the senate, consisting of two catholics and two protestants; and received the presents which the Imperial cities are accustomed to make to distinguished personages. Every thing that was interesting in Augsbourg was shewn to him, particularly all that appertained to the arts and sciences.

Pius VI. was possessed of erudition, at least in what related to theological affairs. He displayed it with affectation, and it was celebrated, as it generally happens in similar cases, by the most exaggerated flattery. At the library of the city, where his literary knowledge was most conspicuously displayed, an incident occurred, trifling enough in itself, but which produced a great effect upon the public mind in Germany. The librarian, M. Mertens, who was a protestant, was commissioned to make a speech to him; but considering himself as the organ of the whole city, in which the catholic religion was co-equal with his own, he hazarded expressions so respectful, and so little conformable to the language of a heretic, that all those of his sect took great offence; and the pontiff himself appeared almost as much embarrassed as flattered. It was still worse when the learned protestant was seen to bend his knee before the head of the catholic church; all the fanatics, for there are also fanatics among the Lutherans, set up an outcry against such idolatry. In vain did Mertens endeavour to excuse himself, by saying that genuflexion was one of the ceremonies of the Spanish court. He was not forgiven for affording the papists so signal a triumph.

Pius VI. passed three days at Augsbourg, in the midst of ceremonies, religious and profane; and

nowhere did he leave behind him a more favourable idea of his eloquence, affability, and knowledge. The journals of the day speak of them in terms of enthusiasm.

Augsbourg was interesting to him in more than one point of view. It was there that he received, for the first time, the homage of those refractory children, whom he had been accustomed to hold in horror and detestation; it was at Augsbourg that the Roman church had received that painful wound which is still bleeding; and it was there, in short, that he found himself in the presence of that elector of Treves, to whom he was indebted for one of the greatest consolations that Rome, afflicted by so many misfortunes, had for a long time received. For it was to the solicitation of this devout prince, that M. Hontheim, his suffragan, had yielded, when he recanted, as we have before observed, his work published under the name of Febonius, and which was so formidable to the court of Rome. He accordingly took great pleasure in the society of a client, whose zeal did not appear to him less edifying than his birth was illustrious. He was not, like Joseph II., one of those children disobedient to his paternal exhortations; nor was the tribute of respect that he received from him mere show and grimace. Notwithstanding his apparent serenity, he stood in



need of consolation; and found it in the effusions of the pious elector.

The secret chagrin and disquietude which accompanied him from Vienna, manifested themselves at Augsbourg upon a remarkable occasion. Among the personages, more or less distinguished by their rank, who crowded round him, were four prelates of the empire, imperceptible sovereigns, whose territory is scarcely visible upon the map. One of them, bishop of Ochsenhausen, in Swabia, conversing with him in Latin, the pope asked him how many convents he had belonging to his see. *I have eleven under me*, answered the prelate, *with a sorrowful air; but six of them are situated in the Austrian dominions.* This was recalling painful ideas to the mind of Pius VI.; for, among other measures that the emperor had taken, he had decreed that no priest in the Austrian states should in future acknowledge a foreign sovereignty. Here Pius VI., lifting up his hands and eyes to heaven, suffered his painful secret to escape him. *Oh! my dear children, I have left nothing unattempted to keep things as they formerly were, or to restore them to their pristine state; BUT——the business, however, is not finally settled: let us pray and hope.* He did not express himself in this manner in the letters which he wrote to Rome.

Three days after, he set off for the Tyrol,

the elector accompanying him as far as the frontier of his little state. There a separation took place still more affecting than the preceding ones. On the 7th of May he arrived at Inspruck, where he was received by the archduchess Elisabeth, the emperor's third sister. She was abbess in that town which was the capital of the Tyrol. Her brother had recommended her to receive the sovereign pontiff with all the solemnity compatible with her situation; but the archduchess was led by her pious sentiments to improve upon the emperor's instructions. He was received at Brixen by the bishop, who endeavoured, by every mark of respect, to make the holy father forget the chagrin he had given him the preceding year, by strictly forbidding the clergy of his diocese the use of the bull *Unigenitus*. He arrived at Trent on the 10th of May, and was received there by the bishop of that city, so famous in the annals of the Roman church; but he made no stay. After having passed through Roveredo, he a second time entered the Venetian territories. Verona received him with a display of all the magnificence of which its situation admits. The wide bed of the Adige, which washes the walls of that city, reflected the splendour of a superb illumination. Conducted in pomp to the amphitheatre of Verona, and looking down from the top of that noble monument of the an-

cient Romans upon the vast enclosure which formerly was devoted to their pleasures, the sovereign, the great pontiff of modern Rome, lavished his benedictions upon sixty thousand of the faithful prostrate at his feet. The bishop of Verona was treated by the holy father less affectionately than his flock. He had recently addressed a pastoral letter to his diocesans in the Tyrol, which was too consonant with the principles of the cabinet of Vienna not to give great displeasure to the bishop of Rome. He had dared to suppress the confraternities of the Heart of Jesus, and of the Lord of St. Francis. He had dared to forbid the admission of the pope's indulgences till they had been examined by himself, and had obtained the approbation of the emperor. It would have required a great effort of Christian charity in Pius VI. to forgive such serious injuries.

No similar circumstance imbittered the pleasure he derived from the brilliant reception that awaited him at Vicenza and Padua. He was approaching the capital of that republic against which he had more than one cause of complaint; and, notwithstanding the repugnance of the Sacred College, could not resist the temptation of seeing Venice. The senate, which was acquainted with his intention, sent Manin and Contarini, two procurators of St. Mark, to meet



him as far as the frontiers of the Tyrol, and to preside over the entertainments that were prepared for him all along the road. His entry into Venice afforded a spectacle, the only one of its kind, perhaps, in the world, and such as the Venetians themselves had never seen. The patriarch, and eighteen bishops of the Venetian state, had gone as far as Fusina to receive him, each in his own gondola, and each surrounded by the dignitaries of his diocese. Upon the banks of the Brenta, he found a galley magnificently adorned, which the doge and the *signoria* had sent him. He was thus conducted, surrounded with a crowd of boats and gondolas, as far as the island of San Georgio-in-Alga, situated at the distance of half a league from the city. There the doge, the senate, and the principal magistrates of the republic, were waiting for him in their magnificent gala dresses. Upon perceiving them, the pope landed from his galley; and the doge received him in his arms, and was about to fall at his feet. Pius VI. graciously prevented him; and from that moment the most friendly intimacy took place between them, and began to awaken the suspicions of the jealous senators appointed to watch over the conduct of the doge. They embarked in the same gondola with the patriarch, and two nuncios; Garampi of Vienna, who had accompanied his holiness

ever since his departure, and Ranucci of Venice. Their retinue seated themselves in the two other gondolas belonging to the doge. They rowed along, attended by five or six thousand boats and other vessels, variously ornamented. Upon approaching the great canal of the mint, which is the true entrance of Venice, the pope was saluted with two hundred guns, from seven gallies stationed in that port. For several hours all the bells in the city announced his arrival. The banks of the canals, all the windows, and all the roofs of the houses were crowded with spectators. Never had such universal enthusiasm, nor such a concourse of people, been seen at Venice; nor could any city in Europe exhibit a multitude of spectators consisting of such motley groups. After empty, but brilliant ceremonies, the pope was taken to see every thing remarkable that Venice contained. The Venetians had reserved for him the spectacle most likely to gratify his curiosity; the ceremony of the marriage of the doge to the Adriatic sea. It was regularly celebrated on the Ascension-day; but this year it was deferred till Whit-monday, on account of the pope. Every thing was prepared to make the sight as pleasing to him as possible. The preceding evening he had officiated with great pomp in one of the principal churches of the city. The day of his departure

was drawing near. Entreaties were vain ; his resolution was not to be shaken. What could be his motive ? On this it is not easy to form any conjecture ; for Pius VI. could sometimes be secret and reserved. It had, however, been remarked, that the doge had been extremely prodigal of his attentions to the pope ; that he had had several conferences with him, which were thought too familiar ; and that sometimes, even in public, he had affected to speak to him in a whisper. What secrets could he have to communicate ? Could the nominal head of the republic, who is subject to more rigorous laws than the meanest citizen, have any thing to conceal from the knowledge of the senate ? The republic had firmly resisted the usurped authority of the Holy See. By vindicating its unalienable rights, it had afflicted the sovereign pontiff. Did the doge wish to sooth the pope's resentment of this severe conduct ; to give him consolation, or even hopes ? Did he wish to make his peace at the expense of his sovereign ? The gloomy state-inquisitors doubtless conceived suspicions, and did not hide them from the doge. They reminded him, in harsh terms, of his dependence, his duty, and his danger. The pope perceived it, and repented having done the jealous senate an honour of which the Sacred College thought it unworthy. He was afraid of



being a source of trouble to his affectionate host, whose affability might be construed into a crime against the state; and set off from Venice on Whit-sunday, without waiting for the ceremony, still more absurd than pompous, which was to be celebrated on the following day.

He passed a second time through Padua, where new honours awaited him. On his arrival at Canaro, which was the boundary between the Venetian and the ecclesiastical states, he took leave of the two procurators of St. Mark, who had accompanied him thus far. He was received upon the banks of the Po by cardinals Des Lances and Caraffa, who were come to congratulate him on his return to Italy. After having passed over the bridge recently built across the Po, he made his solemn entry into Ferrara, the first city of his dominions, and immediately resumed the exercise of his sovereignty. On the very day after his arrival he held a consistory, in which he proclaimed the dignity conferred on cardinal Herzan, whose nomination he had, according to a whimsical custom, reserved *in petto* for three years. He raised to the same dignity the archbishop of Ferrara and the good cardinal Mattei, who will again be brought forward when we have occasion to speak of the Roman revolution. This prelate joined to the piety of his profession

a peaceable disposition; but his mind was inclined to superstition, and a blind devotion to the maxims of the Holy See. His exaltation astonished a part of the inhabitants of Rome, and was a triumph for the Jesuitical party, who thence concluded that Pius VI. had not been perverted by his travels.

At Bologna, he received an affectionate visit from one of his most faithful and most illustrious children, the duke of Parma, who had inherited none of the philosophical boldness with which his father had dared to resist the pretensions of the court of Rome. At Imola, he was received by his uncle, cardinal Bandi; on the gate of Faenza he found flattering inscriptions, by which his vanity was much gratified. At Cesena, he had an enjoyment of another kind. He there found his family assembled, happy to see and to welcome him again to his native place. Continuing his route afterwards through Pefaro, Fano, and Sinigaglia, he arrived at Ancona, where he was received with great parade. A statue had been erected in that city, representing him giving his benediction to the people; but it was something else that the inhabitants of Ancona expected from his magnificence. He paid a visit to their port, where he was received with a salute of artillery and martial music; went on

board a ship which had been prepared for him, and for a moment fancied that he was possessed of a navy. He made a very short stay at our Lady of Loretto, Recanati, and Macerata; performing, however, divine worship, and distributing benedictions wherever he stopped.

As he approached Rome, his route was marked by accumulated homages of respect and stupid admiration. In several places he passed under triumphal arches; in others he found pompous inscriptions. At Foligno, some nuns of a poor convent solicited relief: *It would be of no use to you*, answered the pope, *your convent will be immediately suppressed*. It was so, in reality, a short time after; but the suppression of monasteries, from whatever quarter it came, was sure to be a source of chagrin to the holy father. The expulsion of these poor nuns from their convent occasioned an insurrection among the people; and to suppress it, the two authorities were obliged to concert measures. The magistrate came to the assistance of the bishop, and ordered the rioters to be apprehended. There are times and places in which inclination alone are insufficient to operate the most useful and even the most trifling reforms.

From Foligno, Pius VI. proceeded through Spoleto and Narni to Otricoli. In the latter



place he had an opportunity of making a parade of his taste for the arts and sciences, which the many curiosities of every kind that he had seen, during the last two months, had only served to revive. Carara, the secretary of the congregation of the council, who in a profession, in general devoted to inutility, had cultivated the fine arts with success, was waiting for him at Otricoli. It was he who was charged to continue in the environs of that place the excavations which had already furnished the *Museum Pio Clementinum* with the most exquisite monuments of art, antique statues, busts, columns, tripods, and mosaics. Pius VI. applauded these discoveries as his own work, and, after having given orders to proceed with the excavations, took the road to Civita Castellana; the last place at which he slept before his arrival at Rome. He there found two persons whom he had made happy during his journey, monsignor Campanelli, recently elevated to the office of pope's auditor, and monsignore Erskine, whom he had appointed promoter of the faith. These premature favours had satisfied none but those who had received them. Campanelli and Erskine were two upstarts, who had as yet deserved but little of the Holy See. The favour they enjoyed was an additional grievance, with which

the pope's impolicy furnished the mal-contents of Rome, whom he should rather have thought of appeasing. But for some time past he seemed condemned to act unseasonably upon every occasion.

## CHAPTER XIV.

*The Pope's Arrival and Reception at Rome.*

UPON approaching his capital, Pius VI. received testimonies so expressive of the satisfaction felt at his return, that a man more modest than himself might have believed them sincere. Whether, however, he was tired of homages, or conscious that he did not deserve those that were reserved for him, he requested and obtained that a part of them should be suppressed. It was intended to erect a triumphal arch upon the *Piazza del popolo*, which he was to cross, to illuminate all the quarters of the town through which he was to pass, and to celebrate his entry by fireworks, concerts, a great entertainment, and even a ball. It was also the intention of the Sacred College to go and meet him at the *Porta del popolo*. Pius VI. declined all these honours: he only permitted Albani, the dean of the cardinals, cardinal Antonelli, his favourite, and his beloved nephew, the duke de Nemi, to come and receive him at Ponto Molle. He could not, however, escape from all those noisy testimonies of public joy, which are rather matters of form than of real respect; from salutes of artillery, the



ringing of the numerous bells of Rome, and the illumination of the principal hotels. But those effusions of the heart, those spontaneous acclamations which a contented people pour forth, but which cannot be extorted from them, all those testimonies of affection and gratitude which a sovereign must and ought to feel, were not very prodigally bestowed; and this he must have perceived. It was not that the Roman people doubted of his success with the emperor; and even if they had, Pius VI. having other claims upon their affection, would have been pitied, and have been only the more beloved; but matters which more nearly concerned them were the measure of their sentiments in regard to the pontiff. The whole ecclesiastical state, particularly the capital, complained aloud of the high price of provisions; and it was not by their silence only that his subjects had expressed their discontent. All along the road from Bologna he had heard the most bitter complaints; received the most energetic petitions; and the momentary enthusiasm, occasioned by his return, did not efface the unpleasant impressions they had made. While he was passing in state through the streets of his capital, some of those expressions were heard which courtiers call *seditions*. The cardinals and the prelates who were about him con-

cealed, or disguised the truth. Cardinal Pallavicini, his secretary of state, an honest, though a weak man, felt much concern, but said nothing. The cardinal de Bernis himself, perhaps the most sincere of his friends, did not dare to break a silence, so scrupulously observed by those about the pope's person; but from that time he was accustomed to say, *I see plainly that the reign of Pius VI. will in the end cost him many a tear.* The common people, who had less discretion, revealed to him what was so carefully kept secret. A few days after his return he was hissed in the streets of Rome; and dared no longer go out on foot. But at that time one thing only occupied his mind. He was persuaded that he had immortalised himself by his apostolical journey; and, by way of obtaining credit for his success, was loud in his praise of Joseph II. In his first interview with his most intimate friends, he ingenuously said: "The emperor has a great deal of religion. He assured me, and proved, that he was the best catholic upon the face of the earth. It was by his counsellors that he was led astray, after the death of his respectable mother." The wise, but severe minister of Spain, agreed that his journey did him honour; "but I doubt," added he, "whether it will be useful to religion and the Holy See."—"Give

"me time," replied the holy father, "and you shall see that I will obtain more from the emperor than you may perhaps imagine."

The truth, and it was soon evident, even to the most undiscerning, was, that he had suffered himself to be imposed upon by the wheedling manners of Joseph II., and to be deceived by his vague and unmeaning promises. Joseph, when he chose to take the trouble, was sure to please; and he neglected nothing to make himself agreeable to the pope. Penetrating and artful, he was soon acquainted with his adversary, who was a perfect stranger to the language of courts, and had neither desire nor power to dissemble. He easily divined his inclinations, and took care to flatter the propensity which he discovered for the defunct society of Jesus. This, indeed, was one of the great means employed to gain his point. Accordingly Pius VI., on his return, proud of the emperor's concurrence in his sentiments, was less careful to conceal that affection, which the courts of Versailles and Madrid had long suspected, in spite of his protestations to the contrary. He took a pleasure in repeating to the ministers of those courts, that the emperor had said to him: "If the suppression of the Jesuits had depended upon me, it should not have taken place. Charles III. was in the wrong to insist upon it with so much warmth;



"but the empress of Russia is fully resolved to *preserve at least the seed.*"—Pius VI., by these communications, prepared himself an excuse for the condescension which he did not delay shewing, upon this occasion, to the formidable Catherine. But he betrayed his own secret; and the ministers of France and Spain expressed to him their uneasiness. No matter, said they, if the empress of Russia keep the Jesuits in her empire, provided you do not acknowledge them as such. Upon which the pope hastened to justify the suspicion, and again protested that he would fulfil the promise he had made.

The question, however, was to give a formal account of this journey, which had made so much noise, and been so very expensive, to dazzle at least the credulous, and to obtain the applause that had been so sparingly dealt out to him on his arrival. He had taken time to prepare a pompous narrative, which was not ready till three months after his return. Notwithstanding the high opinion he entertained of his own eloquence, and the small share of confidence he reposed in cardinal Pallavicini, he chose to submit this narrative to his judgment. The cardinal found it prolix and minute, and took the liberty of making a great many erasements, which did not make it appear less tedious and unreasonable. The pope delivered it with great em-

phais, in a solemn consistory held on the 23<sup>d</sup> of September. After a multiplicity of particulars, which served only to prove his puerile vanity, he thus concluded: "The *great genius* of the emperor Joseph, his very particular affection, of which we have received so many proofs, his affability, his philanthropy, had appeared to us a favourable augury; and we must confess, added he, *that our confidence has not been deceived*. Indeed we have already obtained from his equity some important concessions, and he likewise gives us hopes of obtaining several others."

The Sacred College did not expect to hear from the mouth of the pope only a long account of compliments and ceremonies. What had the catholic church, meaning themselves, benefited by this journey, the object of which was to convert the emperor? This was a subject in regard to which the pontiff left them in total ignorance. It is true that he promised, by a brief, to make the whole catholic world acquainted with the advantages he had gained. But this promise would have been difficult to fulfil. The events which took place shortly after his return to Rome would but too fully have contradicted the assertions that he might, perhaps, have ventured to insert in his brief.

His journey, which had met with so little ap-

probation, even at Rome, before it was begun, became, when it was finished, a subject of bitter reproaches, and even of invective. A short time after holding his consistory, the expectation of which had, perhaps, suspended the resentment of the discontented, he found upon his praying-desk a virulent writing, which, among other abuse, contained the following phrase: *What Gregory VII., the greatest of priests, had established, Pius VI., the lowest of priests, has destroyed.* In the mouth of a philosopher this would have been an eulogium. It was a calumny in the mouth of a fanatic. The pope was very much affected at this injustice. He submitted to it with a resignation that does him honour. He wrote with his pencil the following answer at the bottom of the abusive paper: *The kingdom of Christ is not of this world: he who distributes heavenly crowns, taketh not away perishable crowns. Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and to God the things that are God's.* Pius VI. would have saved himself a great deal of vexation, had he regulated his conduct by these maxims; but even to profess them was much for a pope. This answer, indeed, displayed as much dejection as it did moderation. It sufficiently indicated that Pius VI. was beginning to open his eyes. From that period every thing concurred to involve him in affliction. The formidable claims of Joseph II., the opinions



of the enlightened men at that time in Europe, found partisans even at Rome. It was discovered that two booksellers there privately sold several pamphlets against the authority of the Holy See, and against celibacy, the works of that pretended Febronius, the real author of which had made a solemn abjuration of them; and the dissertations of a learned German, named Eybel, as attractive by their contents as by their titles: *What is the pope? What is a cardinal? What is a bishop?* The two delinquents were brought before the Holy Office, did penance in the audience chamber, received a blow with a stick at each of the verses of the 51st psalm, recited in their presence, and paid a fine of five hundred crowns to the treasury of the *propaganda*, which professed maxims somewhat different from those they wished to disseminate. This noise served only to bring into greater vogue the pamphlets which gave so much alarm, excited a degree of interest in favour of the booksellers, and much indignation against their persecutors.

## CHAPTER XV.

*Sequel of the Pope's Disputes with the Emperor.*

**B**UT Pius VI. had vexations far more poignant to experience from that prince, whom he considered *his friend*. In the first place, before the end of this year, a month of which he had passed in intimacy with him, he learned that Joseph II. was about to deprive all the churches of his dominions of their landed estates. Pius VI., armed with all the weapons of the Gospel, wrote to him a letter, in which he quoted the sacred scriptures, invoked the sacred apostles, cited the sacred canons, reminded him of his promises, which, alas! he had also considered *sacred*.—"What would your majesty then  
 " prove that you have had no regard for my ad-  
 " vice, or at least that it has been soon forgotten!  
 " Where then are those protestations of attach-  
 " ment to the purity of religion, those orthodox  
 " principles which your majesty professes, &c.  
 " &c." This long and pathetic letter was dated the 3d of August. Ten days after, Joseph returned a dry and laconic answer.—"The re-  
 " ports which alarm you are false; and, without  
 " searching into the texts of the holy scriptures,

" which are subject to various interpretations  
 " and explanations, I feel within me a monitor  
 " that instructs me, as a legislator and as a pro-  
 " tector of religion, what it is fit I should  
 " do, or what I should omit ; and with the just  
 " and upright disposition which I know I possess,  
 " this monitor can never lead me into error."

Such an answer was certainly not a favourable omen. But Pius VI., faithful to the advice which Jesus Christ gave to his disciples, to make themselves like unto children, was, like them, easily alarmed, easily reassured, passing rapidly from chagrin to serenity of mind, from dejection to hope. He could not be persuaded that the *incomparable* Joseph II. meant to deceive him. " Oh, no !" said he ; " but his ministers have altered the substance of what we had together agreed upon."—And it was in the midst of these subjects of alarm that he held this consistory, and delivered that discourse of which we have already spoken. His exterior, in public, corresponded with that security which he was desirous should obtain credit ; but his temper, which he could repress when he was exhibiting himself, broke out in private. To the people of his household he was impatient, passionate even to brutality, and rude in his conversation ; he who affected all the forms of urbanity, who used the



purest and most elegant language in his prepared speeches, the style of which breathed mildness, charity, and all the Christian virtues. Even cardinal Pallavicini did not escape his rough behaviour. Convinced of the inutility of his advice, he in the end was silent, as were the rest of the Sacred College. Bernis himself kept upon the reserve. He continued to receive from the pope proofs of affection and confidence; but he knew him to be imprudent, he saw him under the influence of perfidious advisers, misled either by fanaticism or ambition. Since his return from Vienna, his principal confidants were the Ex-jesuit Zaccaria, and the cardinal Gerdyl; who from that period, looking forward to the papacy, leaned towards the Jesuits.

Pius VI. affected a particular friendship for cardinal des Lances, formerly one of the most violent antagonists of the defunct society, and now become one of its warmest partisans. It was in the intercourse of these suspicious friends that he imbibed his hopes and his rules of conduct. Little susceptible of durable impressions, after having grieved for a while, he consoled himself: his health had not suffered from this combination of circumstances, which would have fretted any other person to death. It was his wish to reign and to live a long time; and those who watched him

closely, clearly saw that, as long as the *dogma* was not openly attacked, he would patiently endure every thing else.

He therefore also bore with that constant apathy, which has attended him even in these latter times, the suppression of all the mendicant orders in the hereditary states; the subjection of all the religious orders to the authority of the bishops; and, what must have appeared still more painful, a new edict of the emperor, which took from the *datario* the nomination to all the bishoprics of the Milanese and of Mantua. Joseph, entirely taking off the mask, called himself in this edict *supreme guardian of the church, and administrator of all its temporal effects*. What these expressions meant and foreboded was not misunderstood at Rome. Pius VI. alone appeared not to perceive their tendency.

At the same time, the emperor suppressed all the useless convents, applied their revenues to the expenses of the state; took upon himself the nomination to all benefices which should fall vacant during the months reserved for the pope; restricted the prerogatives and the jurisdiction of the nuncio, &c. &c. And these examples (which would have been so scandalous at any other period, and, a century before, have occasioned schisms, insurrections, and perhaps a civil war) were imitated by several princes of the em-

pire, by some electors, and even by the elector of Treves, whom the pope had found so submissive at the time of his passing through Augsbourg. Every thing announced that the reign of the pontiff of Rome was drawing near its end.

The principal, nay the sole object, for some time, of the solicitude of the pope, the *dogma*, an obscure word, subject to so many interpretations, was not as yet directly attacked. One only of the ordinances of the emperor could lead the timid or fanatic catholics to think it in danger. This was his edict concerning toleration, which was dated in 1781, and which Joseph himself, enlightened by experience, had in some respects modified. This subject had been agitated more than once in his conferences with Pius VI., who was fearful of seeing audacious heresy, by the means of this protecting edict, gradually invade the domain of the catholic church. Joseph had endeavoured to reassure him, but had met with little success. He had given him, towards the end of the year 1782, so many causes of chagrin, that he thought it his duty to address him a few lines of consolation at the beginning of the following year. He therefore wrote to him in a friendly style, which very well answered its purpose, that this edict concerning toleration, which had so much alarmed him, had occasioned scarcely any apostacy; that



he had taken measures to prevent there being as little as possible ; that he was in hopes of thus coming to an amicable arrangement with him upon several other points. These few words, for some time, restored the credulous pontiff to tranquillity ; but it was of little duration.

Pius VI., encouraged by this sort of invitation, entered into a regular correspondence with Joseph : he wrote him confidential letters, relying much upon this means of stopping him in his career of reform, which the emperor ran with more ardour than ever. The pontiff thought that the mischief was increasing ; it was therefore necessary to recur to some effectual remedy. *I shall explain myself*, said he, to the ministers of France and Spain, who now found him a little more willing to take advice. They represented to him, that, by writing familiarly to the emperor, he would commit himself, without obtaining any thing ; to this he answered with ingenuous warmth : “ But it is necessary that we let  
 “ him know what we think, in such manner as  
 “ we can, that we may have nothing to reproach  
 “ ourselves with either before God or man ; that  
 “ if the emperor should think proper to laugh at  
 “ us, *it would be the worse for him, as it has been to*  
 “ *so many others* : we must not, however, for that  
 “ reason, neglect our duty. Of this we are  
 “ assured, that these reproaches can never irri-

"tate him, as he hears every thing quietly,  
 "whatever it may be, *and does afterwards as he*  
 "*pleases.*" The persons with whom he was  
 holding this conversation did not know whether to  
 complain or to laugh at his simplicity. They  
 saw that he was in a critical situation. Joseph  
 II., firm in his plan, had nominated the prelate  
 Visconti to the archbishopric of Milan, without  
 the concurrence of the Holy See. Nothing was  
 more simple, or more reconcileable with true ca-  
 tholicism; but nothing, at the same time, was  
 more derogatory to the before-received usages,  
 or more contrary to the pretensions of the court  
 of Rome, which construed these usages into  
 rights. It was not without the greatest repug-  
 nance that Pius VI. confirmed this nomination;  
 but he was anxious to prevent a schism, of which  
 the emperor had not the smallest apprehension.  
 The pope's friends advised him to relieve him-  
 self by an expedient that might conciliate every  
 thing. Answer the emperor, said they, that  
 upon his recommendation, M. Visconti will be  
 preconised archbishop of Milan at the first con-  
 sistory. The pope, upon this occasion, was un-  
 usually obstinate: he sent to the emperor no  
 longer one of those friendly and confidential let-  
 ters, which had been so fruitless, and which Jo-  
 seph ridiculed among those about him, made  
 public some passages, and even caused others to

be printed, but wrote a true brief, in which he spoke the antiquated language of the head of the church. He would have done much better in following the advice of Bernis and chevalier Azara. The letter was sent back to him from Vienna, without a single word of answer. He was in despair, when an event which he expected, but which he did not believe so near, occurred to console his vanity, and made some rays of hope gleam on his pontifical heart.



## CHAPTER XVI.

*The Emperor's Journey to Italy.*

**T**O an ardent mind, and a violent disposition, Joseph II. joined more goodness and justice than was generally supposed in Europe. Persevering to obstinacy in the plans which he had once adopted, he did not allow himself to be stopped by any of the little considerations that render so many of them abortive in others. He was not afraid of giving disquietude to those who might suffer from his measures; but he was not above bestowing upon them such unimportant consolations as he thought compatible with his dignity. He had an inordinate desire of celebrity. It was his wish that the attention of Europe might be constantly fixed upon him. He possessed an activity of body and mind which consumed him, and accelerated his death. Two circumstances made him fond of travelling: first, because distrustful of others, and having full confidence in himself, he did not imagine that he was master of any thing but what had come under his own eyes; and in the next place, he wished to render himself the object of general

admiration for his talents, which were at once both brilliant and solid, for his learning, which was extensive, and for his external plainness, which pretty well concealed his pride. He had promised Pius VI. to return his visit. He was not willing to sacrifice any of his ideas; but he did not make the torments he caused him a matter of sport. In short, he wished to evince that he was not more easily to be shaken, when in close conference, than at a distance; not more in his philosophical court than in the centre of superstitious Italy. He knew that his late reforms caused a great sensation at Rome, and were there talked of in a style somewhat like threats. He was desirous of shewing that he knew how to brave storms of every kind. His austere chancellor of state, the prince of Kaunitz, firm, haughty, and inflexible, encouraged him in his perseverance in respect to the Ecclesiastical See, and expressed himself, on the subject of the resistance of the bishop of Rome, with greater harshness than even the emperor himself. He had said very publicly, that if Pius VI. refused to preconise the archbishop of Milan, he would assemble the bishops of Lombardy, and, according to the practice of the primitive church, would cause to be conferred by them the canonical institution to such individuals as the emperor had appointed: that if the court of Rome

should persist in this refusal, it would cause a rupture with that government. Such was the situation of the court of Vienna with respect to the Holy See in the month of December. The emperor's minister at Rome was cardinal Herzan, a well-meaning man, but weak and timid, and frightened at the task which had been assigned him. Unsteady and wavering, between his duty as a member of the Sacred College, and that imposed upon him by his situation, he consulted, hesitated, and trembled; when an incident, which happened altogether unexpectedly, occurred to relieve him, for a time at least, of his embarrassment.

The emperor left Vienna on the 6th of December, after having named prince Kaunitz director-general of all the current affairs, and announced to all the ambassadors at his court that he was going to set out upon a journey *which he considered as necessary*. The only circumstance from which a probable conjecture could be formed as to the object of his journey, was, that he carried with him several of the acts relative to his disputes with the court of Rome. He took his route by Clagenfurt, where he spent several hours with the archduchess Mary-Anne; crossed the Tyrol, Mantua, and Bologna, and on the 18th arrived at Florence. The king of Sweden, who was then travelling under the name of



count de Haga, happened to be at that city at the same time, and was about to proceed to Rome. This having been communicated to Pius VI., he had sent a courier to meet him. Joseph, who had a strong propensity to things out of the common road, and was disposed to play a trick upon Gustavus, for whom he had no great regard, set out some hours before him, met the courier, passed himself for the count de Haga, and under that name entered Rome on the afternoon of the 23d December. He alighted at the house of his minister, who, in his extreme surprise, contemplated him as his deliverer, rather than as his sovereign.

Joseph had not been at Rome since 1769. Among the persons he had there known, the chevalier Azara, who was then agent of the court of Spain, had particularly attracted his attention. He had conceived the most favourable opinion of his sagacity, energetic character, and all the other qualities which he has since displayed. Without making himself known to any person, he wrote to the Spanish minister, requesting a conference with him that very evening; and begging him to fix upon one of the theatres at Rome as a rendezvous. The chevalier Azara had boxes at every public place: he sent the emperor all the keys of them, desiring him to make his choice, and promising to visit them all,

one after another, till he found him. In the mean time, the emperor had himself conducted, by his minister, to the pope's apartments. The news of his arrival had not yet reached the Vatican, where that of the king of Sweden was only known, who every moment was expected to make his appearance. All of a sudden the cardinal Pallavicini was informed that the emperor was arrived. The cardinal could hardly believe it: the pope was struck with a surprise bordering upon terror. Every preparation was making to give him a proper reception; when Joseph, in his uniform, appeared at the door of the holy father's closet.

Pius VI., although thunder-struck at so abrupt a visit, received him with every token of satisfaction. They held a pretty long, but vague conference, and afterwards went together to St. Peter's church. The pope offered the emperor a praying-desk by the side of his own. Joseph, who could affect simplicity to admiration, modestly declined that honour, and knelt a little behind the pontiff. They parted soon after. "This church," said the emperor to the pope, "is not the proper place for compliments, permit me to go and visit your museum." The pope's two nephews accompanied him thither; but the appointment which he had made with the minister of Spain interested him much more.

He quitted every thing to repair to the box he had chosen, where he was soon joined by the chevalier Azara. Joseph II. was exceedingly vexed at this first conversation being interrupted by several intruders, eager to pay their court to him, and who were very coldly received. The king of Sweden was of the number, and was no better treated than the rest. *Good night, count,* said the emperor abruptly to him; and immediately after left the box, followed by the chevalier Azara, with whom he paid his respects to some Roman ladies that were present at the representation, and hastily returned the visit he had received from the king of Sweden: impatient to escape from the uninteresting crowd, and to resume the thread of his conversation with the Spanish minister, he hurried him into a retired place, where they passed some hours *tête-à-tête*.

It is since known, what the credulous Pius VI. was far from doubting, that in this conference Joseph had unfolded, with great heat, a plan that was about to astonish all Europe. He intended no less than to break entirely with the court of Rome. Joseph had foreseen and combined every thing: he was sure of the consent and concurrence of thirty-six bishops of his dominions. The *dogma*, the ecclesiastical hierarchy, were to remain untouched; but he was to withdraw his subjects from that pontifical supre-



macy, which was of no benefit to the essence of religion, and was only calculated to produce civil disturbances, and, perhaps, to recall the fury of fanaticism. In his opinion the church was a branch of the state, and it was the duty of a sovereign to subject it to temporal laws, and hold its ministers in the same dependence as other subjects. He could no longer acknowledge the authority of Rome; he laughed at her thunders, which had in former times overthrown the world, but which at present could only impose upon children and old women. The papists called him a schismatic, which gave him little uneasiness. The churches would be less rich, the priests more exemplary, the monks far less numerous: the benefit would be general; it would promote public tranquillity, morality, and even the cause of religion itself. Joseph II., it is said, never was more eloquent, more determined, or displayed more, than on this occasion, the strength of his genius and extent of his knowledge.

The chevalier Azara, who had listened with attention, and without interruption (for this was the manner of carrying on a conversation with Joseph II.), at length obtained a hearing. He had no small difficulty to make him feel the inconveniences of so precipitate a resolution. It was not, said he, yet indispensable; the noise

that it would make might produce disagreeable consequences even to the emperor himself. If he had no fears from the fanaticism of Rome, was not that which prevailed in a great part of his own dominions to be dreaded? The pope was obstinate, because he was ill-advised; but was it not possible to make him alter his opinion? Could the emperor not attain his ends at less expense? Was it not necessary to reserve violent remedies for evils altogether incurable? &c. &c.

These arguments, from a man whom the emperor esteemed, and whose principles and intentions could not be suspected, appeared to make a considerable impression upon his mind. He broke off the conference with the most conciliatory disposition. Few persons were at that time acquainted with his sentiments on his arrival at Rome. It appeared even that he did not disclose them to cardinal de Bernis, for whom he had, in other respects, great affection and esteem; but he could not explain himself to a prince of the church as freely as to a lay minister, who was neither likely to have the same interests nor the same prejudices. Except in this he treated the cardinal with the greatest attention, and reposed in him a confidence which the other might have conceived to be unlimited. "Were you not much surprised," said he, "at my unex-

"pected arrival at Rome?"—"Undoubtedly,"  
 replied the cardinal.—"I did not wish the  
 "Romans to believe that they could intimidate  
 "me, and that I was unable to answer the ar-  
 "guments contained in a letter which the pope  
 "lately wrote me, and which I sent back to him  
 "because it was an improper one for me to re-  
 "ceive, and was not at all calculated to make  
 "me alter my resolution; for I never deviate  
 "from a plan which I have adopted upon ma-  
 "ture reflection. Another motive of my jour-  
 "ney to Rome was to return the long visit which  
 "the pope paid me at Vienna. *I have a regard*  
 "*for the person of Pius VI.: he is a good kind of*  
 "*man.* You would laugh if you could hear what  
 "passes at our conferences: he often grows  
 "warm, and even sometimes gets angry; I let  
 "him go on his own way; while I keep my  
 "temper, and adhere to my determination. I  
 "know very well that he would now give me  
 "the indult that he refused me for the nomina-  
 "tion to the archbishopric of Milan, and to all  
 "the consistorial benefices of Lombardy; but I  
 "will not accept as a present a grant which be-  
 "longs to me by the right of sovereignty. I am  
 "not to blame if my predecessors have been ne-  
 "gligent or too timid. I asked the pope for this  
 "indult out of respect, and not as a favour. He  
 "refused it to me in consequence of bad advice;



“ and yet a similar indult for Corsica was granted, without hesitation, to Lewis XV.”

The cardinal endeavoured to pacify him, and to make him sensible that there was some difference between the present case and that which he quoted; that Pius VI. was perhaps excusable in persisting in the preservation of the rights of which he had found the Holy See in possession. —“ My resolution is fixed,” replied Joseph with warmth, “ and I should be sorry if the pope should compel me to certain extremities.” . . . . (He here stopped, the chevalier Azara had heard him say more); then continuing the conversation: “ At the bottom, I must repeat it, the pope is *a very good kind of man*; he does not even want for sense; but he is not aware that times are altered. I shall not hurry myself; but still less will I recede.”

During the six days that Joseph passed at Rome, he had several conferences of this sort, as well with the cardinal de Bernis as with the chevalier Azara. He had also one with the pope, which was very long and extremely animated. Each with warmth set forth what he called *his rights*. Pius VI. admitted that he had not been able to succeed in making him a convert; but Joseph had taken good care to flatter his vanity at the same time that he was vexing his heart;

and when they parted, the pope was more delighted than ever with the emperor. The great question between them, above all others, was the nomination to the archbishopric of Milan, and to all the consistorial benefices of Lombardy. Joseph had come to Rome perfectly determined not to receive the indult which he had chosen to ask for, and which had been refused him: however, the sollicitations of the ministers of France and Spain staggered his resolution. "Well," said he to them, when he was ready to set off for Naples, "I shall have no objection to accept this indult, but on condition that it shall be irrevocable, and drawn up in such a manner as to appear that I have accepted it solely out of friendship for the pope."

Joseph set off for Naples on the 29th of December, leaving cardinal Herzan full authority to sign an agreement, in which the pope should give up to the emperor the nomination to the bishoprics of Lombardy, *in conformity to the inherent right of sovereignty.*

It may be truly said that this journey of the emperor to Rome was much more advantageous to the Holy See, than that of Pius VI. had been to Vienna; and that it served to prevent a rupture. Joseph had arrived with the most hostile intentions. But the representations of the cardinal de Bernis, and particularly those of the

chevalier Azara, whose prudence, while he appreciated the usurpations of the court of Rome, dreaded the storms which always accompany even the most desirable changes; more deliberate reflections upon the consequences of the overthrow, the signal of which he was about to give; perhaps, even some emotions of kindness for this old pontiff, who was not personally deserving of ill-will, but had considerable claims to compassion, calmed this first effusion of violence. Each of the two adversaries displayed, in the battle they fought, a mixture of firmness and condescension; and each thought that he had come off with honour. Had they not been personally acquainted, a rupture would have been inevitable. However, there were some pretty warm disputes between them, when the emperor, on his return from Naples, again passed several days at Rome. They contended about the form of this agreement, which had been almost entirely settled previous to their separation. Joseph himself drew up another. Pius VI. thinking that sufficient attention was not paid to the honour of the Holy See, refused to accede to it. On this occasion Joseph could not repress his ill-humour, and pettishly putting up the rough draught of his compact: *What need have we of agreements,* said he; *we are friends, and shall always be so; and each of us will do in his dominions whatever he thinks*



*proper.* The pope had a moment's courage.—  
*Very well,* replied he, *if your majesty has the arch-*  
*bishop of Milan consecrated without the canonical in-*  
*stitution, all intercourse with this prelate shall be*  
*broken off, and his church shall be treated like that of*  
*Utrecht.*—He was not aware of the danger he  
 ran by pushing the emperor home. Joseph,  
 however, appeared a little disconcerted. He  
 again found himself in the dilemma which the  
 prudence of his counsellors had made him avoid.  
 After a moment's reflection he took out his  
 draught, corrected it, descanted upon it, and even  
 disputed with some warmth; and at length the  
 two negotiators themselves drew up in Latin the  
 compact that was to terminate their quarrels. It  
 was immediately fairly transcribed, copied, and  
 interchanged. But these two illustrious per-  
 sonages, while encroaching upon the functions of  
 their chancery, had suffered some schoolboy's  
 mistakes to escape them in their Latin produc-  
 tion. They agreed that it should be corrected;  
 and Joseph received a copy on the 20th of Ja-  
 nuary, the eve of his departure.

In the three conferences they held together,  
 the pope had the prudence not to speak to the  
 emperor of the letter returned in so rude a man-  
 ner; and Joseph was pleased with his silence.  
 He, however, embarrassed him exceedingly, by  
 conversing with him about one of the projects

which he proposed to carry into immediate execution. He wished to have in his dominions several vicars-general; and in order to provide for their support, he told the pope that he meant to appropriate to himself the tythes; and some other revenues that the neighbouring bishops possessed in Austria. Pius VI. ventured to say to him with firmness: *they will refuse to accede to this arrangement.*—*Very well*, replied the emperor, *I will find means to make them give me their consent.* We shall see in the sequel that he kept his word.

With the exception of these little storms, the emperor and the pope were very well satisfied with each other. Pius VI., whose weaknesses the emperor flattered with his usual address, took a pleasure in relating the particulars of their conversations. By his own account, the emperor had shewn him the greatest confidence, and had communicated to him the most important secrets respecting the principal cabinets and the anecdotes of the sovereigns of Europe. It was impossible for any man to have a greater command of words, or more wit. *In a word*, added he, *the emperor says what he pleases, but not always what he thinks.* In matters that did not concern the prerogatives of the Holy See, the pope was upon the most familiar footing with him. One day, when Joseph was speaking to him about persons that he had known belonging

to the church, he began a pompous eulogium upon cardinal Buoncompagni, legate of Bologna, a man of merit, whom the pope, however, had never liked. He thought he could not better extol his uncommon capacity than by saying: *He is capable of governing an empire.*—*Well*, replied the pope, *take him then; I will give him to you.* Nevertheless he was obliged, some time after, to take him for himself. Although this journey of the emperor had cost Pius VI. some painful sacrifices, and had made him anticipate others, after having been very much disconcerted at his visit, he appeared exceedingly pleased at it in the end. He was at a loss how to make Rome sufficiently agreeable to *his friend*, Joseph II. He very seriously proposed to him to come and see him again, in order to be present at a canonisation. It is not said that Joseph seriously promised to return; but it is well known that he took occasion, even at Rome, to amuse himself with his invitation.

On his first journey to the capital of the Christian world, he did not shew himself to so much advantage as in 1784. At both periods he displayed a persevering disposition, never losing sight of his object; by turns polite or austere, according to circumstances; always popular, and perfectly acquainted with the genius of the modern Romans, to which he adapted his



conduct. On his second journey he appeared to follow this plan, but with still more address. Affecting a great simplicity of manners, he avoided ceremony, and shunned homage. But always flattering the caprices of the Romans, whose affection he courted, perhaps more through ambition than vanity, he frequented the assemblies, the public places, and even the churches. This latter attention, no doubt, appeared to him necessary, in order to do away the prejudices to which his quarrels with the pope had given birth. Pius VI. had the goodness to mistake his motive. He did not perceive that these attempts to gain popularity concealed projects which, had Joseph lived longer, might have become much more dangerous to the temporal authority of the court of Rome, than his reforms in ecclesiastical discipline were to the authority of the Holy See. His endeavours among the Romans were so successful, that more than once he heard issue from their groups that cry of enthusiasm at which a more distrustful pontiff might have been alarmed: *Viva il NOSTRO imperatore!* Long live *our* emperor! During this journey he made, to please them, an effort which must have cost him more than all the others, and which he had not made in 1769; he was generous, and even liberal. He visited several monuments and public establishments, and was not sparing of his presents. He distri-

buted near thirty thousand florins in the hospitals, and among the people. In short, when he quitted Rome, on the 21st of January, 1784, every body was satisfied with him, and nobody more so than the pope.

## CHAPTER XVII.

*The Emperor gives the Pope fresh cause of Uneasiness.*

PIUS VI., however, had not surmounted all the obstacles which he was to experience from the court of Vienna. He had provisionally settled his principal difference with the emperor, in a manner less mortifying than he had reason to hope. He was congratulating himself on this triumph, for which he thought he was chiefly indebted to his dexterity and to the friendship with which he had contrived to inspire Joseph. "I chose," said he, "to give up to him the nomination to the great benefices of Lombardy, of which the Holy See was in the habit of disposing; but at least the bishops thus nominated will always have recourse to me in order to obtain their bulls." Even in the opinion to the most rational cardinals this transaction still saved, in some degree, the honour of the court of Rome. But when the question was to carry it into execution in regard to the archbishop of Milan, new difficulties occurred, which the wise considered puerile,



and to which it is astonishing that Joseph could have attached any importance. Four months were spent in settling the form in which the new prelate should be announced to the consistory. This was an indispensable formality, according to the customs of the Holy See. But, how to comply with it without offending the emperor? At length it was agreed that the pope should propose for the archiepiscopal see of Milan monsignor Visconti, *nominated* by the emperor, *by virtue of the amicable agreement made between his holiness and that monarch*; and in this manner Pius VI. announced the nomination to the Sacred College. The remainder of the year 1784 passed without any serious altercation.

The following year was to the pope a new era of difficulties on the part of Germany; but he himself was very imprudently the occasion of some of them, by that rage for wishing to extend every where the branches of his power, and by his inclination to retrieve a part of his losses. He could not remain peaceably in possession of the ground he had left, but aspired to new conquests!

Without consulting the emperor, without thinking of the ecclesiastical princes, he took a fancy to create a nunciature at the court of Munich, and consequently a new rival to the spiritual authority of the prelates of Germany.

Immediately the elector of Mayence, and the archbishop of Saltzbourg complained bitterly to the emperor of this attack made upon their diocesan rights. The pope thus revived a very delicate question, upon which Joseph II. had explained himself in a most energetic manner. He answered the demands of the two archbishops, by saying "that the nuncios were to be no more  
 " than mere envoys of the pope as a temporal  
 " sovereign; but that he would never suffer them  
 " to exercise in the empire, or at his court, any  
 " jurisdiction in ecclesiastical affairs." The cardinal Herzan, his minister at Rome, was charged to explain himself to that effect to the pope.

Pius VI. and his council were thunderstruck at this declaration, which they ought to have expected. But they well knew that nothing was to be obtained of Joseph II. by resistance. The pope answered his minister in an ambiguous manner; that he could not give up the connexion which he had been desirous of establishing with the elector of Bavaria; but that he had conceived himself entitled to delegate to another the authority concerning which there had been no dispute.

There was then at Rome a certain marquis Antici, a clever Italian, who, by dint of artifice and intrigue, had succeeded in acquiring a sort of consequence. He was accredited from the

electors of Bavaria and Cologne as envoy to the Holy See. He was desirous of making a merit with the court of Munich, of procuring it a nuncio. This was a kind of relief for the catholic powers of the second rank. How great was the embarrassment of the prelate Antici, when one of his constituents, the elector of Cologne, as hostile as his brother the emperor to the prerogatives of the nunciature, enjoined him to oppose with all his might the innovation he had himself promoted! The pope, though very much vexed at the double disappointment, could not refrain from laughing on seeing the double plenipotentiary obliged to act, at the same time, two parts so contradictory! For, as Joseph II. said, Pius VI. was, at bottom, *a good kind of man*. He was not susceptible of any very great degree of feeling. Ill-humour, chagrin, affection, hatred, nothing in short made upon him a lasting impression. His mind was very frequently agitated, but never deeply affected. Hence the numerous inconsistencies, and several of the calamities of his pontificate. Hence, to balance the account, that unalterable impassibility and that florid health which he has preserved in the midst of the most overwhelming difficulties.

In the month of October 1785, the nunciature experienced a mortal blow by an ordinance of the emperor, which deprived the nuncios in



Germany of every kind of jurisdiction, and restored to the bishops all their ancient rights. The elector of Cologne, who, as archbishop, was personally interested in this ordinance, hastened to publish it in his states, to the great mortification of the Ex-jesuits and all the advocates of the Holy See. The elector of Mayence, who had no nuncio at his court, but who dreaded the pretensions of the new nuncio of Munich, took, in his states, such measures as were conformable to the views of the emperor, and dried up one of the sources, to which the *datario* was going to apply under various pretences. Henceforth no more dispensations, no more foreign jurisdiction were to be exercised in Germany. The Holy See saw itself successively stripped of its absurd prerogatives and of its scandalous revenues; and the catholic princes, great and little, without foreseeing that, in other respects, they were acting contrary to their own interests, awoke the reason of the people, released them from their sacred chains, and prepared their minds for those changes which France has since operated with so much success.

The elector of Bavaria was the only prince of the empire that strove to oppose distinguished marks of good-will to the affronts which the court of Rome received from all the other parts of Germany. He welcomed Zoglio, the new

nuncio, with all the magnificence of his court; at the same time announcing to his subjects that henceforth they were to apply to that nuncio, as they had before done to those of Vienna, Cologne, or Lucerne. But the four archbishops of Germany, those of Mayence, Cologne, Treves, and Saltzbourg, uttered loud cries against this innovation, and their ordinances spoke the language of the emperor. Zealous partisans of spiritual authority, they were equally ready to claim it for themselves, and to contend for it with usurpers. They therefore most positively forbade their diocesans to apply, *under any pretence*, either to Zoglio the nuncio, or to Pacca the new nuncio, who had just succeeded Bellifoni at Cologne. The two nuncios durst not resist. They had recourse to the pope, who had involved them in this dilemma, from which it was incumbent upon him to extricate them. Pius VI. at that time employed, as his principal secretary, the Ex-jesuit Zaccaria, of whom we have already spoken more than once. He was a fanatic who possessed that sort of talent, or at least that kind of erudition which qualified him for such a task. He immediately began to draw up a learned statement, in which, had he been left to himself, he would have proved, in an *irrefragable* manner, no doubt, that in *all times* the Holy See had possessed *the right* of sending, at

*as pleasure, and wheresoever it thought proper, nuncios invested with full power, without any interference, on that account, on the part of the diocesan bishops and archbishops.*

Notwithstanding the rapidity of his eloquent pen, Zaccaria was anticipated by the four archbishops. They formed a congress at Ems, near Coblenz, and boldly deliberated on questions which the Holy See had till then considered as appertaining exclusively to its jurisdiction; such as the precepts for fasting, the obstacles to marriage, the organisation of chapters, &c. The elector of Treves, more scrupulous than his colleagues, would have wished not to perplex that pontiff, whom he had received at Augsbourg with so many marks of affection and respect: he therefore made a few difficulties, but at length submitted. Several bishops of Germany, and even some secular princes, in other respects rather devoted to the court of Rome, adopted the principles of the congress of Ems; and Pius VI., in these times already so difficult, promoted, or suffered blind advisers to promote, a storm which had an effect directly contrary to that he had so fully expected. Every one examined questions to which the public attention was called, and which, for political reasons at least, should have been left undecided. People thus became familiarised to a sort of independence, which, a



century before, would have appeared to border upon schism, or even upon sacrilege. Thus the court of Rome seemed to call in the assistance of those who were to undermine the unstable foundations of its throne; and these ecclesiastical princes, encouraged in their boldness by the example and advice of a philosophic emperor, accelerated that great crisis which was to overthrow this throne, and reach even themselves. They could not have calculated better for the progress of reason, nor worse for their own interests.

On this occasion the court of Rome committed one imprudence after another. Instead of endeavouring to support its pretensions at a period when the intelligent were shocked at them, when even the devotees began to suspect them to be bordering upon usurpation, it ought to have confined itself, agreeably to the advice of Bernis and Azara, and that which would have been given by Benedict XIV., to the enjoyment of those rights in which it was quietly left in possession; but, like a desperate gambler, it exposed itself to total ruin, in order to retrieve a few trifling losses, or dispute some litigious grounds. Will it be believed that, instead of yielding to this assemblage of resistance, it wished to employ tenacity, and even violence, as in those times

when the most absurd pretensions were authorised by the blind docility of nations? Unskilful in the choice of its agents, it had seen the nuncio Zoglio irritate, by its claims, the archbishop of Saltzbourg, who was a Colloredo, son of the vice-chancellor, and who, consequently, was more certain than any other person of the emperor's support.

Its nuncio Pacca behaved with still more effrontery. He bethought himself of publishing, in his nunciature, a manifesto, addressed to all the prelates and vicars of the electorate of Cologne; and in which he *ordered them* not to acknowledge the dispensations for marriage, to certain degrees of consanguinity, that had been granted *without the indult of the pope*. The elector of Cologne, brother of the emperor, repressed this insolence, by *ordering*, in his turn, all those to whom copies of the manifesto had been addressed, by a *person calling himself a nuncio*, to send them back under the same cover, and to procure a certificate of their having done so from the different post-masters. The elector of Mayence, being informed that the vicars of his archbishopric had also received the same orders from the nuncio, wrote to them, that he hoped they would hold in just abhorrence this impudent usurpation, the *sole object of which was to disturb the peace of their consciences*, and that they

would send back to Cologne the manifestoes that had been transmitted to them by a *pretended nuncio*.

Even the chancery of the electorate of Treves could not but take offence at the boldness of the nuncio Pacca, and professed with energy that evident principle, that no person, *however pompous might be the title with which he was invested*, could exercise a legislative power in a foreign archbishopric. Thus the pious elector of Treves himself professed and propagated those very principles which philosophy afterwards employed with so much energy to destroy, at least in France, all the fabric of superstition.

The nuncio Pacca did not suffer himself to be awed by so much opposition. In spite of the sovereigns who would not acknowledge him, he continued to exercise the functions of nuncio, and endeavoured to excite fermentation in those countries where he yet found many credulous and timid persons. The archbishops of Germany addressed to the pope the most pressing demands, the most energetic protests. They could obtain no answer. The marquis Antici, cursing more than once his double character, was obliged to present to the court of Rome those acts so prejudicial to its authority; and, as it happens in similar cases, he was made responsible for their contents. The audiences he had were



scenes of ill-humour and violent reproaches. His ambitious patience at length was worn out; and he renounced the title of plenipotentiary of an elector, whom he found it so difficult and so dangerous to represent.

The ecclesiastical electors persisted in their bold conduct in regard to the Holy See. The first among them in rank, the elector of Mayence, even went so far as to present to the emperor propositions which made the court of Rome tremble, and which, he asserted, were the expression of the wish of all the Germans. He therein said that those famous decretals of Isidorus, now universally allowed to be spurious, was the sole base on which rested the immunities of the court of Rome. He demanded the convocation of that new council, promised by it for upwards of two hundred years, and which was to exhaust the source of the riches it had usurped. Incessantly evading its promises, and frustrating the hope of the Germanic empire, it continued to violate the conditional compact that it had made with the princes of Germany; and the German people were therefore released from all their engagements towards it. The time was come for the Germans to make another use of all those sums which they sent to Rome for the pall of their archbishops, in order to devote them to the advancement of their

own prosperity, and to the relief of [the unfortunate, &c. A person might have thought himself on the eve of a new reformation. Three years after, the orators of the constituent assembly did not express themselves with more energy concerning the usurpations of the court of Rome. And it was an archbishop of Mayence who introduced this language! He did not suspect that he was thus preparing the public mind for that great concussion, which, by shaking Europe and the catholic religion, was, from enterprise to enterprise, to lead to the secularisation of a great part of his own states.

Such a doctrine could not but be pleasing to Joseph. But, not less bold, he was more prudent than those prelates who, after all, were pleading their own cause, rather than injuring the Holy See. Still following the route he had traced for himself, he proceeded with a firm, though not a hasty step. He favoured the wishes of the ecclesiastical princes, but thought it his duty to retard their completion. Perhaps he chose, at all events, to reserve to himself the honour of initiation, and rather chose to give, in his own dominions, examples to imitate, than concur, as chief of the empire, in a reform of which he would not have had all the merit.

He likewise signalised the year 1786 by measures which afflicted the court of Rome. The

prelates had till then made an essential part of the states of Austria. He excluded them, and substituted commendatory abbés, who were entirely of his own choice. He secularised certain religious orders; that of the Camaldules, for instance, and suppressed most of the convents of some others. He stripped the more opulent of their estates, and of their treasures, both sacred and profane. Their finest pictures were taken to add to the riches of his gallery. Such of their books as were deserving of that honour, were placed in the famous library of Vienna: the rest were abandoned to grocers, or served to make cartridges. All their valuable furniture, whatever had been its use before, was sold by public auction, and the sums it produced were placed in the *bank of religion*. It was not an empty name that he had given to this bank, which was wholly devoted to the payment of pensions to the religious orders of both sexes who no longer lived in communities, to the support of several new bishops and vicars, a great number of whom he established, and to the maintenance of schools and pious foundations. Idleness, deprived of its means, must have grieved at these transformations, at which blind fanaticism must have been enraged, while they could not but be approved of by dispassionate orthodoxy. But the Holy See, finding its satellites successively



impoverished, and their number decreased, was deeply afflicted. No vain fear, no personal consideration affected the emperor's resolutions. He had made a regulation, that no bishop of his dominions should hold two considerable benefices at a time. The cardinal Migazzi, archbishop of Vienna, was also administrator of a rich bishopric in Hungary. He was obliged to make his election. Having decided for the archbishopric of Vienna, he sent to the pope the resignation of his other benefice. Pius VI., who was silently suppressing so many chagrins, sent back this instrument to the emperor, without accompanying it with any observation.

But shortly afterwards there occurred a circumstance which awoke his impatience, and had nearly involved him in a very serious quarrel with Joseph.

That emperor, still persevering in his claim to be the supreme administrator of the church in his dominions, had recently erected the bishopric of Laybach, in Carniole, into an archbishopric, and nominated to it count Charles de Herberstein. By virtue of the last agreement, concluded with respect to the archbishopric of Milan, it was necessary that the pope should, in point of form, censure that nomination. He had the boldness to refuse his concurrence; and what were the titles of the count de Herberstein

to the disgrace of the holy father? Four years before, in a pastoral exhortation, he had promulgated maxims which the court of Rome could not pardon. He had dared to say: *Every person is at liberty to choose the religion he likes best.* The pope required, as a condition of count de Herberstein obtaining his confirmation, that he should retract these *pernicious maxims.* Joseph and his prime-minister at first took great offence at this strange pretension. The old prince de Kaunitz waited himself upon the nuncio Caprara, and, in his usual severe tone, said: "The  
 " resistance of the pope, upon this occasion,  
 " would raise an insurmountable barrier between  
 " the See of Rome and the dominions of his  
 " Imperial majesty, and for ever put an end to  
 " the respect which the emperor hitherto had  
 " for the consequence of the pope. Nothing  
 " could in future prevent him, of his own Impe-  
 " rial authority, from making every ecclesiastical  
 " arrangement, as was the usage in the first ages  
 " of Christianity."

The nuncio, terrified, immediately dispatched a courier to Rome. Never had he so unpleasant news to announce; and whether from want of address on his part, or injustice on the part of the pope, on him was thrown all the blame. This was undoubtedly one of the causes of the prejudice which Pius VI. always had against

him, and which he manifested till the day of his fall. The representations of so disagreeable an interpreter served only to confirm him in his resistance: he had, what was scarcely to be expected of him at that time, the courage to write to the emperor a letter, in which he declared the new archbishop a *heretic*, and proved, from several passages in his pastoral discourse, that he deserved that title. Joseph, who might have been irritated at this obstinacy, manifested as much patience as his minister. He permitted the prelate to send to Rome explanations of the exceptionable passage, but with an injunction not to retract a single word.

This sort of respect served only to render the pope more obstinate. Under different pretences, he postponed the confirmation of the bishop of Laybach; and before the end of the year death came and delivered him from this formidable adversary. Thus was the dispute terminated; but the year following the emperor made the pope and the Sacred College pay dear for this casual triumph. Resentment seemed to animate his zeal for reform.

He began by giving his unqualified approbation to the conduct of the four archbishops, and expressed a desire that it might be adopted by the other prelates. About the same time there appeared at Vienna, undoubtedly with his con-



sent, a publication, inviting all the bishops of Germany to make a common cause with the archbishops; and several of them, with the bishop of Spire at their head, complained to the emperor that they were not summoned to the congress at Ems. Joseph wished to prevent the division which might take place on this occasion between the two classes of prelates; and, instead of replying to the long and lamentable representations of Pius VI., respecting this war declared against the Holy See by all the superior Germanic clergy, wrote to the bishops, exhorting them to concur in the salutary plan which had been conceived by the archbishops; and the Aulic council passed a decree, dictated by the emperor, by which, in opposition to the proceedings of the nuncio Pacca, they annulled the insolent circular letter which he had dared to distribute, and, blaming the condescension of the elector of Bavaria, ordered him not to suffer the nuncio Zoglio, who was received at his court, to exercise any jurisdiction in the states of Juliers and Berg.

The court of Rome was very much affected by this combination, which it saw forming through all Germany, to attack prerogatives that prescription at least ought, in its opinion, to render incontestable, and which appeared to threaten it with mortifications still more cruel. A national coun-

cil might deprive it of its still remaining rights. So many sovereigns, so many individuals of all ranks, prelates, even interested in the support of its authority, transforming themselves into philosophers! What was to become of religion in a contest with philosophy!

It was not, however, from Germany that the court of Rome had then to dread all these calamities. The jealousy, the rivalry of powers, prevented that co-operation which might accelerate the overthrow of its authority, already so much weakened. The four archbishops persisted in their plan of independence and reform, and counteracted the two nuncios in all their attempts; but the bishops, although nearly unanimous in their claims to a sort of independence of their metropolitans, were very dilatory in entering into the measures of the latter. During these transactions the French revolution took place; that revolution so bold, so rapid in its execution; that revolution, in short, which occasioned a suspension of so many projected enterprises, overturned the most solid plans, reconciled little animosities, set aside little rivalities, and, upon the aspect of common danger, united minds most disposed to discordance.

Joseph II., however, pursued to the end of his reign his irresistible inclination for reform. Publications, favourable to his maxims, were either

composed by his command, or circulated with his permission. He ordered that, at least in some of his dominions, the sacraments should be celebrated in the vulgar tongue. He granted to the protestants in Hungary a great extension of his edict of toleration. He allowed a calvinistical church to be established in the very city of Constance, which three centuries before had seen the unfortunate John Hus expiate in the flames his principles, the precursors of the reformation so fatal to the court of Rome. But it was particularly in the Low Countries that his zeal was displayed, that he experienced active resistance, and that he occasioned *his friend* the pope the most bitter chagrin.

It is not our intention to trace here all the innovations which he wished to introduce, with rather an inconsiderate ardour, in the Austrian Netherlands, still less ripe than the hereditary dominions of Germany for philosophical reforms, more disposed to revolt, more difficult to repress. It will be sufficient to mention that he there experienced opposition not only from the people and the clergy, but also from the states of these countries, which yet retained a shadow of liberty against the invasions of despotism. They were already prepared for disaffection, by grievances purely political. They manifested it openly when the emperor would interfere with the



confraternities, seminaries, processions, pilgrimages ; in a word, with every thing which they considered as *religion*. They found powerful supporters, or rather ardent imitators, in the the higher clergy, and particularly in cardinal Frankenberg, archbishop of Malines. The pope had then for a nuncio at Brussels a signor Zondadari, a fanatical and impetuous man, who did not omit this opportunity of making a figure. He pleaded with warmth the cause of the court of Rome, which Joseph had disregarded in his innovations in matters of discipline. On these questions, rendered so delicate by the circumstances of the moment, a discussion took place, in which Pius VI., not yet undeceived, hoped to triumph ; for one of his pretensions was to possess and display the talents of a great theologian ; talents considered very unimportant by Joseph in ordinary times, but which could not but be odious to him when employed to counteract his views. Zondadari, however, hawked about and commented upon the learned memoirs of his infallible sovereign, and encouraged the Brabanters in their resistance.

Joseph, being then subject to difficulties of more than one kind, took umbrage at the work, its author, and, above all, its commentator, and caused the nuncio Zondadari to be banished from Brussels, with forms not very re-

respectful to the representative of the Holy See. Zondadari was obliged to retire to Liege, where he continued to carry on his intrigues more secretly, but not with less success. The troubles which the establishment of the seminary of Louvain occasioned in Brabant furnished him with fresh opportunities of inflaming the minds of the people, by the intervention of their priests; impotent efforts which Joseph despised. The vigour of his governor-general, comte Trautmansdorf, and his own firmness, made him triumph over the nuncios, prelates, and all the fanatics with which the Low Countries were infested.

In Germany, in the course of the year 1788, the same perseverance had the same result. The nuncios wished to continue their contest with the four archbishops; but the latter were united by interest. They had gone too far to recede; and had it not been for the events of the following year, it would have been impossible to foresee to what lengths they would have been carried by their opposition to the court of Rome. They saw themselves powerfully supported by the emperor, who transmitted to the diet of Ratisbon an Imperial decree, in which that court was very cavalierly treated. Joseph there stated, without reserve, that the violent manner in which the court of Rome and its nuncios had resisted his energetic admonitions, justified him in taking

the most serious measures to render prevalent the incontestable principles which he professed, after the example of his predecessors, and that, in consequence, he invited the diet of the empire to deliberate upon this important subject.

This, however, was only a vain formality, which ought not to have greatly intimidated the Holy See. The pope, as well as the rest of Europe, knew the slowness of the deliberations of the Germanic congress, and the impotence of its laws. But this measure was supported by writings, in justification of the conduct of the four archbishops who opposed the claim of the court of Rome; and even these prelates did not confine themselves to a paper war and empty threats. They proved that they could dispense with the pope's interference in matters which they considered within their jurisdiction. The elector of Treves, of his own authority, released the monks from their vows. The elector of Cologne even permitted them to marry when they could offer good reasons for such a step. The pope at this time claimed a right to tythes of lands newly cleared. He ventured to intrust a secular prince with the collection of them in the electorate of Cologne. This prince had farmed them out to the subjects even of the elector. Such a bravado could not remain unpunished. These new farmers were immediately appre-



hended and put in prison. From that moment the collection of the tithes, and the pope's pretensions, were entirely relinquished.

In all this affair between the nuncios and the four archbishops (an affair which would scarcely be deserving of a small place in the general picture of modern history, did it not serve to prove, on the one hand, the incurable obstinacy of the Italians, and, on the other, the tendency of the human mind towards all kinds of independence), Pius VI., as if led away by an evil genius that had conspired against the remains of his authority, heaped faults upon faults, which he expiated only by disappointments. Wrongs that were not more serious have since hurled him from his throne. And after that, let human prudence again predict *infallible* results, and from experience derive rules of conduct!

The quarrels of the nuncios, the troubles of the Low Countries, excited in a great measure by the Holy See, still continued when Joseph II. died. Had a real friendship subsisted between him and Pius VI., as both of them boasted, it must be admitted that in the one, as well as in the other, there was a great distinction to be made between the man and the sovereign, and that, whatever either of the two considered as his duty, has frequently prevailed over his private opinion.

Pius VI. having attained the pontifical throne with principles which, for a pope, appeared to be moderate, has experienced the fate of all those who long hold the reins of government. He became corrupted by the exercise of power. Flatterers had poisoned his disposition, and prepared him for the part that he has played in his latter years in a manner so odious to a portion of Europe, and so disastrous to himself. His fanaticism increased in proportion to the progress of philosophy, and led him to culpable imprudences, which rendered his fall as inevitable as it was merited.

However, about the end of the reign of Joseph, either through condescension towards that prince, or that his conscience reproached him with having concurred in inflaming the Low Countries for idle scholastic disputes, Pius VI. had tried his ascendancy over the superior clergy of these provinces, in order to bring them back to submission. Joseph II. did not reap the fruits of his good intentions, but was thankful for his efforts. At the beginning of 1790, his minister, cardinal Herzan, waited upon the pope. He came to consult him relative to the means of remedying the disturbances of the Low Countries, which were then carried to the greatest excess. The cardinal found Pius VI. occupied in a fervent prayer, and bathed in tears. Was he la-

menting the evils of which he was the author, or those of which he was threatened to be the victim; for this was a short time after the publication of the decrees of the national assembly of France against the clergy? The pope resumed a serene countenance on being informed of this mark of confidence of the emperor. We have more than once seen with what facility he passed from sorrow to joy, and what powerful motives of consolation he found in homages paid to his vanity! Flattered at seeing this obstinate and imperious emperor once invoke his mediation, he instantly wrote to the bishops of Belgium to press them to exert themselves in recalling their untractable flocks to obedience. The answer of the prelates to the brief of the pope was dispatched to Rome on the 8th of March 1790. It breathed a profound resentment for all the attacks that the emperor had made upon the liberties of Belgium, and a firm determination not again to submit to the yoke which the emperor had forced them to shake off; and the prelates, who called themselves the interpreters of the sentiments of the Belgic people, concluded their answer by requesting the pope himself to espouse their cause, in imitation of those powers with which that people had already formed connexions. Thus, unfortunate in all his enterprises, Pius VI., who was not always disinclined to do mischief, was



unable to provide a remedy. Joseph II. had not the mortification of convincing himself of the impotence of his interceder, having died a few days before the departure of the letter of these Belgic bishops.

His successor, Leopold, seemed destined to restore to Belgium days of greater serenity; but it is well known that he did not long indulge that hope. No sooner was he seated on the Imperial throne, than he also announced dispositions more favourable to the clergy and the court of Rome. He even proved, by some acts, the sincerity of his promises. He restored to several bishops of the hereditary states the revenues of which Joseph had dispossessed them; and he re-established several ecclesiastical institutions which his brother had abolished. What was then passing in France proved to him, but too late, that the authority of sovereigns was connected with that of priests. But for this experience he would probably have carried upon the throne of Vienna that spirit of reform which he had displayed in Tuscany, and which, during fifteen years, had greatly tormented the pontificate of Pius VI., as we are about to see in the second part of this work.

## 7 DE61

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

